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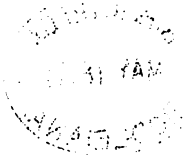

THE MONK

OF THE

MONASTERY OF YUSTE;

OR,

THE LAST DAYS OF THE EMPEROR CHARLES V.

AN HISTORICAL LEGEND OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

From the Spanish.

By MARIANA MONTEIRO.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	7
I.	CAPTAIN PEDRO BARRIENTOS	13
II.	THE LION AND THE LAMB	21
III.	THE FUNERAL IN LIFE	27
IV.	MYSTERIES	33
V.	RECONCILIATION	41
VI.	THE LETTER	53
VII.	MONASTIC LIFE	61
VIII.	THE MONASTERY OF YUSTE AS IT STANDS AT THE PRESENT DAY	71
IX.	RUY GOMEZ DE VARELA	77
X.	THE SECRET	87
XI.	THE SICKNESS	95
XII.	MAGDALENA	101
XIII.	THE MESSAGE IN GOD'S NAME	113
XIV.	THE PILGRIM	121
XV.	THE LAST FAREWELL TO THE VALLEY	133
XVI.	THE BEGINNING OF THE END	145
XVII.	THE END	153
	EPILOGUE	157

INTRODUCTION.

On the southerly brow of the Sierra del Salvador, forty leagues east of Madrid, one mile from Jaraiz and within gunshot from the small town of Cuacos, is still to be seen the celebrated monastery where, in past ages, one of the most renowned men of Christendom breathed the last sigh of his mortal life.

I have seen this monastery. I have passed many hours of my youth under its sad-coloured arches, endeavouring to decipher in its ruins the secret of a great repentance and the heroic poem of a heartfelt piety which, in old age, prompted him to renounce all the pomps of a world wherein all laurels fade, and to cast himself into the arms of Christ. I have frequently contemplated with tearful eyes those walls which, under the hand of time, are fast crumbling like the proud oak

falls to pieces under the woodman's axe; and the arid paths of my imagination have been furrowed by reminiscences of history.

Those green woods and luxuriant trees which surround the building often bestowed their ambrosial perfumes and cool shades to soothe his fevered brow.

On the borders of the lake where he was wont to pass his idle hours is still to be seen the walnut-tree which, in an innocent freak, he planted with his own hands.

The inclined mound rising up to the vestibule of the palace yet remains which he used to ascend on his pet pony; and in this humble vestibule is still preserved the stone he used when dismounting, and the old leathern armchair, standing under the scutcheon of Austria, from whence could be seen the high crests of the Mirabete and the extensive plains of the Arañuelos, furrowed by rivers which resembled silver ribbons, and where he used to sit in the spring, listening to the nightingales singing in the Sierra Jaranda, or taking the sunshine on winter evenings.

In a room, lit up solely by such light as

comes through a thick grating of iron bars like a prison cell, may still be seen the mean arm-chair which served him for repose and meditation; and hewed out in the wall is a small aperture which permitted him to hear Mass from his bed when stricken by sickness.

Under the high altar of the church, in a dark vault, and suspended by four ropes from the ceiling, still hangs the oaken coffin which was made for him, and placed there in order that the priest when celebrating Mass should stand over his remains. These are the last vestiges which speculation, injury, and ingratitude of the age have respected of this great man.

On quitting the monastery and taking the road to Cuacos, the traveller will see the scutcheon of Austria sculptured on the granite walls surrounding the monastery, or, rather, the garden of the palace.

What diverse emotions are produced by the sight of that scutcheon! Some pass it by listlessly, and will even cast a contemptuous smile upon it: others gaze upon it with the stupidity of ignorance.

"All this has gone by," say the first.

"I know not what all this means," reply the last. They are both equally indifferent to the glories of their country.

The monarchs of Spain have parted with the Monastery of Yuste, as though it were an old worthless object. Yuste is no longer a royal possession. Yuste belongs to a speculator who, with all the common-sense of a man of business, has turned it into a silk-manufactory.

Yet the remembrance of this great man still lives in the neighbourhood: it still dwells in the heart of the simple husbandman: it is engrafted by tradition in the minds of these men of goodwill.

Ask the countryman of the Sierra Jaranda about this great man, and you will see him smile sadly, as he points to the monastery: "There did he live, and there did he die—that holy man, the father of the poor, the tutelary angel of the neighbourhood."

And when nightfall comes—when the setting sun like a golden shield goes down behind the mountains del Salvador—then is the silence of that solitude felt in all its imposing grandeur;

then within those ruined walls is heard the plaintive note of the nightingale singing its farewell song to the fading light of day. Those sad warblings are the only tributes of love which the world permits in the last dwelling-place of Charles V. of Augsburg, King of Spain, and Emperor of Germany.

THE MONK OF THE MONASTERY OF YUSTE.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN PEDRO BARRIENTOS.

During the first hours of the night, on the twenty-fourth of March 1557, the watchman of the towers of the segniorial castle of the Counts of Oropessa in Jarandilla de la Vera could discern by the moonlight a group of about one hundred horsemen, advancing over the rugged and solitary road leading to Aldea Nueva.

The clear light of the moon which appeared like a silver lamp suspended from the blue vault of the heavens, and the refulgence from the countless stars that studedd the sky like

diamonds, reflected upon their highly polished armour with changing light; while in the night breeze sweeping down from the Sierra Jaranda the flags which adorned the steel of their lances waved fantastically.

At the head of this troop, which cavalcaded in silence like a legion of dumb giants encased in iron, their prancing making their armour, bits, and gear rattle and clank, rode a man of herculean form and martial bearing. He was mounted on a dark powerful steed of Andalusian breed, which bounded over the broken rocks of the mountains with the agility of a panther, evidently manifesting pride in obeying the expert hand that held the bridle.

The knight was clad in a different dress from his troop, thus denoting a higher grade or quality; for whilst others appeared encased in mail from head to foot, he wore a brilliant doublet of buckskin upon which shone a magnificent silken band, and his feet were covered by top-boots of morocco leather, provided with long spurs. From his side, suspended by a sword-belt of leather studded with gold, hung a long broad Toledo blade.

His powerful hands, armed with gauntlets of iron, held the reins in a consummate masterly manner, and his head was sheltered by a wide slouched hat, from which a black feather waved descending to his shoulders.

That knight was Pedro Barrientos, captain of the body-guard of His Majesty Philip II., a valiant veteran who had distinguished himself in upwards of a hundred combats during the wars of France and Flanders, and a man who merited the confidence of Santoyo.

Pedro Barrientos was a man of about fifty years of age; but, although tried and seasoned, as he used jocosely to say, in encampments, brought up in the open air, and hardened by the fatigues of war, yet he appeared much younger, and his iron bones still retained that great strength which had distinguished him in many a desperate encounter, that he could easily have killed a bullock with the mere blow of his fist.

Loyal like a dog, faithful like a Castilian of old, and strong like another Hercules, he had but one defect: he was deficient in the gifts which had distinguished King Solomon. Yet

though in intelligence this good Pedro Barrientos, captain of his majesty's body-guard, never surpassed, according to his own expression, the most undisciplined recruit of his company, he had made himself respected by an honesty which was above all proof; by his terrible aspect and gigantic height; by an imposing ugliness, set off by hair resembling hedgehog bristles, and a skin hairy like that of a wild boar.

Chosen by Santoyo to take a document of importance from Philip II. to his father, Emperor Charles V., who had for some months been living in Yuste, he started on his journey from Madrid escorted by a hundred lancers, and within ten days had crossed the tract which separates the capital of Spain from the solitary monastery.

After many difficulties encountered on the journey he arrived at Jarandilla and presented himself to the Count of Oropessa, Don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, who ordered that one of the shield-bearers should act as a guide and conduct him to the Monastery of Yuste, which stood about two leagues from the

princely dwelling of that gallant and famous magnate of Castile.

In the cool of the evening of the day on which this tale commences, Pedro Barrientos proceeded on his journey. Before him marched, on foot, the shield-bearer of the Count of Oropessa, a good lad of that part of the country who had served and fought under his master's colours in the wars of Flanders, where he had received a wound in the leg which had slightly lamed him.

By degrees, as Barrientos and his mounted escort penetrated into the Sierra, the romantic scenery commenced to reveal itself in all its imposing majesty; yet those elevated mountains, whose summits are lost in the sky, those gigantic fissures of rocks, which, seen from a distance, appear like vast galleries of colonnades and obelisks, flanked by an exuberant oriental vegetation, did not produce upon the iron breast of the captain the most remote impression; and he only renewed his impatience whenever his horse stumbled, or he had to leap over broken rocks, the effect of volcanic convulsions in that country.

When night had already set in, they passed the town of Cuacos. Barrientos, who was already tired to death with his long journey, called out, in a gruff hoarse voice, to the shield-bearer—

"Tell me, are we never to reach this monastery?"

"There is but a quarter of a league to it now, señor," answered the guide.

"Good heavens, man," murmured Pedro Barrientos, "it seems to me that the leagues of this country are rather crooked indeed."

The captain had scarcely finished this jest when he heard behind him the rapid gallop of a horse, which was fast gaining upon him. He turned round and distinguished, about twenty paces off, a horseman advancing at full speed towards him, mounted upon a little pearl-coloured mare which skipped upon the broken rocks, impelled by the long Moorish spurs of its rider, with the swiftness of a gazelle. He was a young lad of some fourteen summers, and his fair rosy cheeks had still upon them the down of youth like a peach. A black velvet cap, adorned with a swan's feather and fastened

down by a cluster of emeralds, encircled his fair tresses, which fell in silken curls upon his shoulders. He had on a rich vest of green damask silk, embroidered with gold; his velvet pantaloons were finished off by an exquisite pair of Moorish boots; from his waist hung suspended a small sword. Setting spurs to his horse he quickly approached Barrientos, and with a certain imperiousness of tone, said—

"Leave me the way clear, hidalgo."

"Ha, ha!" replied the captain, annoyed; "that youth comes with fine airs. Has he not been taught to ask a favour with more courtesy?"

"I ask favours of no one," cried the youth; "when I find obstacles I surmount them. Let me pass, or I shall jump over you and your horse also."

"Indeed," replied Barrientos, making a ferocious gesture; "let me see you do it, my little hero!"

The youth, without replying, set spurs to his mare, sat firmly in the stirrups, grasped tightly the reins, and cried out with a shrill voice, "Forward, Zaida, forward!"

The animal rose on its hind feet, reared back, and bounding with the lightness of a goat by one side of Barrientos, in four leaps he left the horseman far behind him.

The captain gave a cry of rage. Abashed and humiliated by the intrepidity of the youth, he felt his self-love wounded, and stretching himself forward until he reached the guide's head, he fiercely collared him, roaring out in a voice of thunder—

"Who is that young lad?"

"I do not know, señor."

Barrientos with a violent shake threw off the guide to the side of the path, and setting spurs to his charger dashed off in a frenzied pursuit of the unknown one, saying—

"He shall pay dearly for that insult."

CHAPTER II.

THE LION AND THE LAMB.

In order to understand the captain's tenacity in pursuing the lad who, after all, had not offered the least insult, it is sufficient to bear in mind the peculiar manners of those times and exaggerated privileges of the military. The particular character of the time was eminently quarrelsome and cavalresque; and among a certain class of men of position, a harshly sounding word, a disdainful gesture, the most insignificant sign of contempt, were sufficient to justify an encounter of sword-blades.

Philip II., like a wise and prudent king, had commenced to put the bridle upon the excesses and exactions of the soldiery; but the evil was deeply rooted, and the remedy could only work slowly. The most trivial offence to an officer

in the king's guards would occasion in those days a bloody melodrama; and whole cities have been consigned to pillage and conflagration to gratify the resentment of a soldier of fortune.

Pedro Barrientos followed this unknown lad at a short distance, for though he spurred on his steed to the utmost speed he could not overtake him. This made him, the fierce captain of the king's body-guards, still more eager not to be outdone, and after a short time they both reached the cross of the wayside chapel, which is situated a short distance from the Monastery of Yuste.

When the youth came up to this spot he stopped his mare and wheeled round, facing his pursuer, and with an anger which was truly infantile, exclaimed—

"You are very indiscreet; why do you follow me?"

"Ah, my little hero," replied Barrientos, in a bantering tone, "so you think I am indiscreet?"

"I do think so; and you seem to me something else."

"And pray," retorted the captain, "what else do you think I am, child?"

"A fanfaron!"

Pedro Barrientos raised his heavily gauntleted hand, and the youth, with the rapidity of thought, swiftly unsheathed his dirk.

"Bravo!" cried the captain, breaking out into a loud peal of laughter; "so you take me for a fanfaron? Tell me, my precious youth, for what have you unsheathed that toy you hold in your hand?"

The youth proudly raised himself in his saddle and replied to Barrientos—

"In order to punish your daring! But," he added, with a certain look of disdain, "I perceive you do not come alone. I see your shoulders are well guarded; and this indicates to me that you are not accustomed to hand-to-hand combats like a brave man."

In that moment could be heard at a distance of some fifty paces the galloping of the captain's powerful escort.

Pedro Barrientos turned towards his horsemen, and, in a thundering voice, said, "Halt! Not a single man is to move, and the first who does shall be shot."

Then he directed himself towards the youth, and said, "We are alone now," and raised in an attitude of menace his terrible right arm, which was armed with a gauntlet, and levelled a blow.

The youth parried the blow by moving rapidly his head, and the powerful hand of the giant fell heavily like an iron club upon the pommel of his saddle. The lad then quickly brandished his dirk before the eyes of the captain, who in that instant felt himself wounded in the breast by a slight prick like the bite of a mosquito.

The thick doublet of buckskin which Barrientos wore had served him in place of a cuirass, preventing the point of the steel piercing from side to side.

"Fury," cried the captain, when he felt himself slightly wounded; "this young lad shall pay dearly for this insult."

He was preparing a second time to level a blow upon the youth's head, when the lad, who evidently had no intention of carrying the encounter further, turned, set spurs to his mare, and pursued his journey.

"I will overtake you," said Barrientos, maddened with fury; and unfastening a pocket-pistol from the saddle, he discharged it after the fugitive.

The ball whizzed past his head, and the gallant youth gave a shout of triumphant defiance. After this, Barrientos lost sight of him behind a turning of the road. The captain made a signal to the men to follow him, and in all haste renewed his pursuit of the competitor. It was, however, useless, for nothing more was seen of the youth; it seemed as though the darkness of the night had engulfed him.

In that instant the melancholy sound of a bell tolling for the dead was heard. Barrientos and his men devoutly crossed themselves. They had reached the gates of the Monastery of Yuste.

The captain, assisted by two of his men, dismounted, and lifting the heavy iron knocker, let it fall heavily three times, causing a terrible noise. The door was quickly opened, and the envoy of Philip II. was admitted.

CHAPTER III.

THE FUNERAL IN LIFE.

It was nine o'clock at night when Barrientos, led by a lay brother, slowly ascended the inclined mound which leads to the palace and entered the vestibule. The distant sound of the organ, the bell tolling for the dead, and a faint melancholy chant which seemed to come from the adjacent church was heard. Notwithstanding his intrepidity as a soldier, a mysterious feeling of fear crept over him.

The lay brother, with downcast eyes, appeared wrapt in some grave meditation, and was evidently waiting for the captain to break the silence.

Barrientos at length succeeded in overcoming his feelings, and said—

"It appears to me the lion has chosen a mean cave for his dwelling."

"All things are mean in this world," gravely replied the lay brother; "the walls of marble as well as those made of shifting sands equally crumble away."

"Is this the palace where his majesty resides?" asked Barrientos.

"It is indeed; and this is the arm-chair wherein he sits, and judges himself more blessed than when he sat on the throne of Saint Ferdinand."

"Is it possible that the powerful monarch whom we have all seen should have resigned himself to live in such a pigeon-hole?"

"God, who wounded Saul with the dart of grace," replied the lay brother, "has knocked at the door of his majesty's heart and inspired him to take this great resolution. We mortals should not demand of God the key to His secrets.

"All that is very well," said Barrientos; "but the fact of the matter is, that I have brought a missive from the king for the emperor; will you be so good as to conduct me at once into his presence?"

"Not at this moment; but you may see him in the course of an hour."

Then again came forth those sounds of music which he had heard on entering.

"What mean these mournful strains and this death-knell?"

"It means that the emperor is performing during life his obsequies," replied the lay brother, "and that is the reason you cannot speak to him now; but come with me and you will witness the ceremony."

Barrientos gazed at the lay brother in deep astonishment. He followed the brother up a narrow staircase, opened a little door which led from the palace into the choir of the monastery church, and entered. The scene which presented itself to the captain's view was truly imposing. The entire church was draped in the deepest mourning, relieved by streamers and texts taken from the holy Psalms. The altars were blazing like furnaces of gold, from the thousands of waxlights that adorned them, and in the centre was placed a rich catafalque, covered with velvet cloth, fringed with gold, and surmounted by a silver cross. Upon this catafalque lay an iron coffin—the identical one

used for the obsequies of the Emperor Maximilian. Through the balustrade of the choir, Pedro Barrientos saw the emperor kneeling on a velvet cushion before this catafalque. Ranged behind him were some Spanish and Flemish knights, among whom could be distinguished Don Luis Quijada, the Mayordomo of the emperor, Don Luis de Avila, Knight-commander of Alcantara, and Fray Juan de Regla, his majesty's confessor.

The monks occupied their seats from the choir up to the high altar, presided over by the Prior Fray Martin de Angulo. The ceremony was nearly concluded.

The origin of this ceremony was the singular wish of the emperor to assist at his own obsequies. His desire was being realised, and he assisted at his own dirge with all the fervour which distinguished him in all his religious acts; and those who witnessed this sad ceremony heard him repeat in Spanish the psalms which the community were chanting in Latin.

Barrientos felt overcome by a profound emotion. He saw the humility, the meekness, and the ardent piety of a man whose fame and

greatness extended throughout the universe, and a mute terror, rising from his inmost heart, seemed to arrest the flow of blood in his veins, and this rough warrior, perchance for the first time in his life, thought on the nothingness of his being, and on the problem of immortality.

That tomb towering in the centre of the temple; those lights; those sweet plaintive songs which at one time would swell in terrific intonations, and at others would soften down to a consoling strain; and, beyond all, the sight of that great man bowed down to the earth, worked such an effect upon him, and caused such an impression, that he also fell down on his knees and prayed.

The tolling of the bell, the tones of the organ, and the singing of the choir ceased. The lights were extinguished, and the clouds of incense gradually dispersed. The service was over.

The emperor retired to his apartment, and the monks slowly wended their steps towards the monastery. Barrientos, who had remained on his knees bending low in prayer, felt a hand gently placed on his shoulder; he turned

round and beheld the lay brother. "Come," he said, "the emperor will see you at once."

Barrientos rose up and rubbed his eyes. "I thought I was dreaming, but it was a dream that was doing me good." The lay brother smiled with an expression well nigh seraphic. A few moments later, and the captain had crossed the threshold of the emperor's apartment.

CHAPTER IV.

MYSTERIES.

It was small and modest, and without ornament. A low couch, an old arm-chair, and table of walnut, constituted all the articles of furniture of that cheerless apartment. Upon the table some devotional books were ranged, and a small casket, inlaid with beautiful mosaics, in which was preserved the crucifix and the candle which his grandfather Maximilian, and his consort Isabella, had held in their hands when expiring.

The emperor was clad in the deepest mourning, without any royal insignia which could possibly indicate his former greatness. That eagle glance and proud majestic bearing, serene and arrogant, peculiar to those who have been rocked in regal cradles, and which

generally no one can imitate, or they themselves altogether lose, alone betrayed the dignity of the individual. Charles V. had just completed his fifty-seventh year. The fatigues of his military career, the mental anxieties consequent on the administration of his vast empire, and the austerities of his monastic life, had commenced to undermine his once vigorous and robust constitution, and prematurely anticipated old age.

From his eyes of deep pure blue, such as Titian and his great copyist Pantoza so faithfully depicted, beamed kindly looks; his falling lower lip, the inheritance of the house of Austria, no longer manifested the contempt and pride of his old smiles; his aquiline nose, the index of a valiant vigorous spirit, such as may be observed in the lineage of the Ciros, still lent a charm to his countenance. On his broad manly brow might be traced the shadow of some tell-tale wrinkle, the precursor of age, and which cast over his noble features a deep melancholy expression, behind which lay concealed the secrets of his soul.

Charles V. was tall, his limbs robust and

well-developed, yet his neck had all the beauty and softness of a woman.

The author of this book has enjoyed the privilege of beholding his corpse in the Pantheon of the Escorial, which is still preserved intact, and has therefore had the opportunity of convincing himself of the identity of features, which correspond exactly with those of his portraits bequeathed to posterity by the immortal brush of Titian.

The reader may easily imagine what must have been the emotion of the rough Pedro Barrientos when he found himself in the presence of his former sovereign, and whose recent humility could not all at once dispel the influence which past times and events had given him.

The captain bent his knee before the emperor, but the latter immediately raised him up saying, with extreme kindness, "Only to God and to your king should you bend your knee. I am neither the one nor the other; therefore with a poor old man you may treat without ceremony."

"Sire," replied Barrientos, "I am a soldier;

to me your majesty is the same to-day as you have ever been. I was in Pavia, and whoever has been there can never forget your majesty."

The emperor smiled, and greatly moved said, "You were in Pavia! Ah, my friend! is it not true those were indeed glorious times?"

"Sire," replied Barrientos enthusiastically, "then the fame of your glory resounded on all sides, and everywhere we trod upon Spanish soil. Alas! it is not so now."

"And of what use so much dominion?" sadly answered the emperor. "Six feet of earth suffices for the sepulchre of the greatest the world has ever produced."

Then, remaining pensive for a short time, he added, "I am told you bring me a message from the king: how is my son—do you bring good news from him?"

Thereupon Barrientos drew forth a sealed packet and presented it to the emperor, saying, "This will answer your majesty's question better than I can."

The latter had but taken it in his hand, when he perceived that it was stained with

blood, and drawing near to the knight, said with anxiety, "You have been wounded?"

Barrientos passed his hand over his doublet, and finding that it was soaked in blood, after some hesitation replied, "'Tis nothing, sire, merely a slight scratch; may your majesty be pleased to take no notice of it."

"I shall take notice of it," kindly replied the emperor; "whoever sheds his blood in my service deserves my gratitude. Tell me, captain, how did you receive it?"

"Sire," he said, "the account of this wound is a blot upon my page of services. I have been wounded by the hand of a child, and almost at the very gates of this monastery; and though I did not draw my sword, the lad defended himself from my gauntlet in a most gallant manner, and with a dirk like a toy which he held in his hand, he pricked me most dexterously."

"And pray, when did this take place, and where?"

"About an hour ago, and close to the wayside cross of Cuacos."

"Was this lad riding a pearl-coloured mare?"

"Yes, your majesty, white as the driven snow and light as a goat."

The emperor at those words turned pale, and instantly added, "Describe to me the appearance of the youth who thus crossed your path."

"He was of noble countenance, fair-haired, daring and gallant, dressed in a suit of black velvet, and his cap was adorned with a swan's feather."

"And did he fight with you?" asked the emperor with evident anxiety.

"He fought and wounded me."

"I pray you tell me did you do him aught of harm?"

"When he had wounded me, he set spurs to his steed, and I then fired a pistol-shot after him."

"Have you wounded him?"

"I cannot tell, your majesty, because he disappeared in the darkness of the night like a phantom."

The emperor rose up, and hastily moving towards the entrance of the apartment, drew back the heavy curtain which covered it, and

called with a loud voice, "Don Luis!" then, turning towards the captain, said in a severe tone, "You have behaved badly and have acted rashly. Begone from my presence."

Pedro Barrientos opened wide his eyes, as though he judged himself the victim of a terrible nightmare; but seeing the imposing attitude of the emperor, who motioned him to the door, having made a low obeisance, withdrew from the apartment.

For the space of one hour did the captain remain in the vestibule awaiting the orders of the emperor, who was closeted with his mayordomo, Don Luis Quijada.

"What can have been my fault?" he would ask himself many times, but he could not divine.

At length Luis Quijada entered the vestibule and said, "Your men are already in their quarters for the night, your own apartment is ready for you; go and rest."

"One word," replied Barrientos; "may I know whether I have incurred his majesty's displeasure?"

"You can know nothing," dryly answered

Quijada. But seeing that poor Barrientos lowered his head with almost heroic resignation, he more kindly added, "To-morrow, at ten o'clock, after Mass, come here, and you will see the emperor." Saying this, he left him.

Pedro Barrientos directed his steps towards his apartment, saying to himself, "Mysteries have already commenced; sooner than wrestle with them, I would rather fight his Satanic Majesty."

CHAPTER V.

RECONCILIATION.

THE captain was overwhelmed by anguish and inquietude, unable to find an explanation of what had taken place. He paced up and down the room like a lion in its den, and his head was tormented by most absurd thoughts. Two of his men removed his accoutrements, and on taking off his doublet he perceived his wound was no greater than the prick of a lancet, and therefore needed no dressing. An abundant though frugal supper was laid for him, of which he could not partake a morsel.

He dismissed his servitors and seated himself in an arm-chair. He placed his elbows on the rough walnut table, covered his face with his hands, and gave himself up to the wildest speculations. Barrientos tried hard to comprehend the sudden change which had

taken place in the emperor's manner; but after an hour of cruel meditation he gave a tremendous blow with his fist upon the table, and said, "I cannot understand all this that is passing; I really think I must be going mad." And truly his head was burning with a feverish fire, and he experienced that peculiar indisposition consequent upon a great nervous excitation.

He arose, and going to the window of the apartment, threw it open and looked out on the expanse of night. Bathed in the soft mellow light of the moon, which was shining in the heavens like a silver lamp, the towers of the monastery stood out in bold relief against the dark blue sky. It was one of those lovely star-light nights when the young watch whilst the old are asleep. As he gazed the hour of midnight struck, and throughout the whole building reigned calmness and the silence of the grave.

The monks were sleeping soundly, the fountains in the courts were rippling, the night breeze was kissing the flowers, which trembled at its touch. Barrientos hid his face in his

hands, as though to arrest the fearful tempest which raged within, and he began to experience the beneficial effects of breathing the breeze of that spring night, laden with the perfume of flowers. But the recollection of what he had gone through appeared to throb against his fevered temples, and, unable to drive away altogether the tormenting thoughts which troubled him, his mind would revert to its torturing abstraction.

"Oh!" he exclaimed at last, giving full scope to his wrath and fierce anger, "that I should see myself brow-beaten and humbled by a young lad, by a mere child, who has played me this trick, and that on his account the emperor should have treated me as though I were a rag! May God deliver that boy from the reach of my fury, for were I to meet him, I would crush him under my heel as I would a viper!"

Two gentle knocks at his door interrupted the captain's monologue. Then he distinctly heard a clear childish voice saying in a beseeching tone, "Open the door, captain, please do open."

"Who are you, and what do you want?" brusquely replied Barrientos.

"I am an acquaintance of yours," answered the voice, "and I am come to ask a favour from you."

The captain opened the door and drew back in mute astonishment. Standing immovable on the threshold of the room, cap in hand, was the elegant youth whom he had encountered at the wayside cross of Cuacos, and whom he blamed for the disgrace into which he had fallen.

It was indeed him and no other; of this there was no doubt. He was dressed in the same doublet, the identical Grecian suit of velvet, the Moorish spurs, the lovely blade, and the cap with the swan's feather.

"Come in," said Barrientos in a gruff voice. The young lad entered into the room in a most charming, graceful manner. "Thank heaven, I have you now in my power!" exclaimed Barrientos, drawing his long sword and placing it upon the table.

The youth smiled with the greatest ingenuousness, and said, "Do you still bear me ill-will?"

"Yes, I do," replied Barrientos, his eyes darting sparks of wrath. "I bear a grudge against you for the attack of to-night, and I have sworn by the blessed Saint James that you shall pay me for that stroke of your blade."

"Be calm," quietly replied the lad. "If you feel aggrieved, I will offer you satisfaction. I am an hidalgo, and if you are a soldier you ought to be an hidalgo also. If you only knew," added the youth, in a tone which was more and more insinuating, "if you only knew how dearly I love soldiers. Oh, to be a soldier!" he exclaimed, with indescribable expression; "oh, to be a soldier! the dream of my whole life! war, victory, martial laurels! how beautiful must all this be!"

Barrientos, in spite of himself, felt overcome. The innocence of the lad, that mixture of truthfulness and boldness, that enthusiasm full of simplicity and daring, could not do otherwise than captivate the soldier's rough heart.

"Listen," cried the lad, after a short pause; "I am well read in books of knight-errantry, and I often think what a lovely thing

a tournament must be. Have you ever assisted at one, captain?"

Barrientos looked at him, wondering if he had gone mad. "I have not assisted at any tournament," he gruffly replied, "nor have I any wish to. Where I have wrestled has been in wars, where one has to make good use of one's wrists, and where the steel becomes blunted with blood."

"Well," the youth said, "I have read all about the campaigns of Hannibal and Scipio, of Julius Cæsar and Carlo Magno; therefore you see that I also am well versed in warlike affairs. And do you know that every night in my sleep I dream that I have eclipsed all the glorious deeds which these famous captains performed?"

Barrientos could not help bursting out in a loud peal of laughter.

"Do not laugh," he added, almost in a passion. "The emperor and many of the knights also laugh and tease me when I tell them this; but notwithstanding their ridicule, I feel there is something here," and he struck his forehead with his hand.

Barrientos was quite charmed by his delightful simplicity, and was fast forgetting his resentment.

"Do you see this hand?" cried the lad, showing him his small fair hand. "It looks like that of a child, does it not? But you will see what I can do with it." He then suddenly took up the captain's sword, which was of an enormous weight, and brandished it about, turning it this way and that, until he raised it above his head in a triumphant sweep, greatly to Barrientos' astonishment.

"Well done!" cried the captain; "you manage that weapon like a veritable soldier of Gonzalo de Cordova."

"Yet, for all that," he said sadly, "the emperor and Don Luis Quijada laugh at me. Thrice have I asked them to allow me to have a Toledo blade instead of this dirk, which resembles a toy, and they have all made fun of me. Is it not cruel? For this reason is my life in this monastery so wearisome to me."

"Do you reside here?" Barrientos asked.

"Yes, I have lived here for the last four

months; but these monks, this austere life, this solitude, this inaction, make me desperate. Oh, to command soldiers like you! To wear across the breast the band of a captain, to project war actions and gain military honours —that is my ambition! But patience, the day will yet come when my dreams will be realised."

Barrientos every moment was feeling drawn more and more towards the youth. The candour, the loftiness of aspirations, and beyond all that innocence, virginal as gold, that shone from his soul, succeeded in calming down the dark, moody temper of the soldier, who was fast forgetting the encounter at the wayside cross.

"Who are you?" he asked in a more gentle tone.

"I do not know," the lad replied sadly.

"What is your name?"

"My name is John."

"Have you any parents?" the captain asked.

The youth turned pale and bowed his head, troubled by a cloud of melancholy which passed across his brow, as he in a trembling

voice replied, "*I have no parents, I am an orphan.*"

"Poor lad!" the knight exclaimed, as, unable to repress the better sentiments of his heart, he held out his hand, which was tenderly pressed by the youth.

"Thanks," replied the orphan; "you look like a good man; tell me, do you still bear resentment towards me?"

"No," replied Barrientos; "you are an orphan, and when I see a child without parents my heart is drawn towards it." And a large tear rolled down the captain's cheek. Then he added, "But when I am in the midst of warfare, seldom indeed do tears come to my eyes; yet when, after a battle, I think of the many parents who are bereft of sons, and children left fatherless, I feel then that I am a man before I am a soldier, and my heart is broken."

The youth again pressed his hand, saying, "You have touched the tenderest chord of my heart—I also am a victim of war."

"You?"

"Yes," bitterly replied the youth.

"Come, tell me your history."

The youth hesitated, but overcoming his emotion, said, "My history is brief. The emperor took a city by assault; the soldiers found a babe in a cradle—that child was myself. My parents must have died in the breach, for the emperor instituted every inquiry, but all in vain. He then took me under his protection and placed me under the care of Don Luis Quijada, who educated me, and I am his pupil."

"The emperor behaved well!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the youth, "he is the greatest man upon earth, and I would willingly shed the last drop of my blood for him! He has filled my life with benefits, and were he to send me to die for him, I would lay down my life for him without a moment's hesitation."

"But why have you followed him to this monastery."

"Because such was his wish. I was living in the Castle of Villagarcia—where I had been brought up and educated under the care of Doña Magdalena de Ulloa, the wife of Don Luis Quijada, who is my adopted mother—when the emperor, about four months ago,

sent my tutor to bring me here. I obeyed his command, and we both came to Yuste."

At that moment the monastery bell began to ring for matins, and the youth, turning to depart, said, "It is late; you must need repose. To-morrow we shall meet again."

"But wait," said the captain, "you said you wished to ask me a favour—what is it?"

"I wish you not to mention to the emperor our encounter of to-night."

"Ha, ha! have we already little secrets?"

The youth bowed his head and cast down his eyes to the ground.

"I am very sorry," added Barrientos, "but he already knows about it."

The lad stamped his foot on the ground with anger as he said, "So you have already told him?"

"I did; but had I known you did not wish me to do so, I should not have said a word about it. Yet I trust you will hold me as a friend."

"A friend?" replied the youth: "we shall see whether you prove yourself worthy of that name." He took his leave of the knight and quickly left the apartment.

"What an extraordinary being!" exclaimed Barrientos, when he was once more alone. "By Saint James, but that bit of a boy has made me shed tears! For the life of me I cannot understand all that is taking place here; but to sleep, and let us see what to-morrow brings."

CHAPTER VI.

THE LETTER.

The day arose beautiful and serene. The sky glistened with a pure light, and the greensward, carpeted by the marvellous hand of spring with flowers, filled the air with fragrance. The bright sunshine lit up the dark valley, and the flowers, bathed by its golden light, lifted up their corolas elated and joyful, as though in that beautiful disc they could see lithographed the sweet smile of the Mountains del Salvador.

The doves and partridges tossed about the leafy branches of the chestnut trees which surrounded the monastery, and upon the tender shoots of the olive trees perched the blithe goldfinch, breaking with its trills the imposing silence of those vast solitudes.

The Emperor Charles V. had risen early.

Having, according to his daily custom, assisted at the Holy Sacrifice and performed his devotions, he partook of his frugal repast. Then he would, as usual, seat himself close to the balustrade of the vestibule, and pass many hours watching and contemplating the beautiful scenery which lay before his view, breathing the pure mountain air and basking in the sunshine. Often, when on that spot, would he forget the sorrows that had constantly beset his path, and that deep secret melancholy, impenetrable to all human calculations, which hung about him, and, relaxing from his wonted austerities, would yield himself up to simple recreation among friends and domestics.

It was then that Don Luis Quijada entered in, saying, "The Captain Pedro Barrientos seeks an audience of your majesty."

The emperor quickly replied, "Let him come in at once."

Barrientos once more was conducted into the presence of the emperor, and left alone with him; but the fear of having incurred his displeasure the previous night obliged him to lower his head, as though he found himself

arraigned before the most severe and stern of judges.

The emperor, who with his eagle glance seemed to penetrate the embarrassment of his position, kindly addressing him, said, "Last night I treated you with extreme severity, captain; will you forgive the weakness of an old man?"

Barrientos, overcome with emotion, cast himself on his knees, and replied, "It is not meet that your majesty should ask forgiveness from a vassal."

The emperor raised him up and motioned him to a chair close to his own, saying, "We have to speak together. I have read the letter you brought, and my son speaks of a certain danger—this danger concerns the young lad whom you encountered last night. You little know how interested I am in that child; some day, perhaps, you will know why. However, as I judge you to be a good man, and I have need of your services, I wish to entrust you with an important mission."

"I am at your majesty's commands," replied the captain.

"I have need, Barrientos, of the true, faithful heart of a man who if necessary would even die for me."

"Here is that very heart," replied Barrientos, striking his breast; "and my hundred lancers, like myself, also know how to die for your majesty."

"I accept your offer, captain, as regards your own self. I require you at my side, but your troop I must send away."

"It was the king's wish that they should remain at your majesty's side," replied Barrientos.

"And what for? Monks and soldiers do not amalgamate, and would keep me always in a state of anxiety. No, Señor Barrientos, the sanctuary has no need of soldiers for its custody, because it is guarded by God Himself. I myself live but a few paces from the tabernacle — what can I have to fear when I am so close to God?" He paused for a moment and then added, "Your troop must leave this very night, and you remain by me."

"As your majesty desires," responded Bar-

rientos. "My services shall be at your disposal."

"Are you willing to die for me, were it necessary?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"Thanks," replied the emperor, holding out his hand. "Then listen to what I shall exact from you." He arose from his chair, approached Barrientos, and led him to the window, and in a low mysterious tone, said, "It is not my life which is in danger—who cares for a life like mine, which is worth so little, and is fast approaching its end?—but there is danger threatening another life of greater value than mine. Will you promise to ward that life from the blow of the homicide?"

"I swear it, sire."

"Man, do not swear; if you are a man of honour your word is sufficient. Will you promise me to serve as a shield to the breast which is threatened, to defend it with your arm, and, if necessary, place your own breast in peril when his will be menaced with the point of the dagger or the edge of a knife?"

"I promise it, sire."

"Captain, I am exacting much from you, but it is with a good end. Listen, the life which is in danger is that of John—of that lad whom you encountered last night."

"Of that orphan?"

"Yes; a dark presentiment tells me that he is menaced with the blow reserved for me, and you can ward off that blow from his head."

"What is it that needs to be done, sire?" Barrientos asked, with a degree of vehemence.

"To be ever at his side: to follow him everywhere, to be his shadow, and to recount to me all you see."

"I will do so, sire."

"Well, you must know, captain, that John goes out every day towards evening from the monastery on horseback, and returns when night sets in. Where he goes to is not known, but I have a presentiment that he goes out seeking danger. Will you follow implicitly my instructions?"

"I shall not be wanting in my duty."

"You have a brave heart—it is all I require; for that reason do I confide to you this work, on which my life nearly depends."

"Rest assured, sire, that I will watch over him."

"That is it—watch over him!" exclaimed the emperor in an agitated voice; "watch over him like a father, now that he has none. . . . Oh, Barrientos, be for that poor orphan a kind of Providence!"

When he finished saying these words the emperor's voice remained so exhausted that he could hardly be heard. He, however, quickly recovered himself, and added, "You already know the kind of danger which threatens John. It is quite a history! But in order that he may respect and obey you, come with me, and I will present you to him, and enjoin him to do so."

Saying this, he took the captain's arm, and they left the apartment together.

CHAPTER VII.

MONASTIC LIFE.

Some days elapsed after the scenes described in the previous chapters, during which nothing occurred to interrupt the calmness and quietude of the monastery, which was truly a house of peace, and where the echoes of the world rarely troubled the minds of its inhabitants.

The emperor's health was excellent, and the beneficial influence of spring, that commenced to adorn herself in a superb manner, with all its pleasant, joyous, picturesque splendour, seemed to infuse into him his former vigour. His time was spent between devotional exercises and simple recreations, such as fishing and the cultivation of a few flowers in a little garden which the monks had reserved for his use in the "Huerto de Boro;" and from time to time he would venture to make short

excursions into the neighbouring villages, in order to leave there marks of his liberality.

He had increased his domestic staff, in compliance with the urgent request of some friends who visited him, and he even resigned himself to allow at his table, which was always frugal and sparing, the use of an old service of plate.

The greater portion of the day was spent in spiritual exercises. He daily recited the whole Divine Office; and when his infirmities prevented him from doing so, his confessor, Fray Juan de Regla, would recite it aloud in his presence.

He assisted daily at High Mass, which was always performed with great solemnity, music and organ accompaniment; but when sickness would not allow him to leave his room, he heard Mass through an aperture in his chamber which communicated with the church, fronting which his bed was placed.

After dinner he would listen with the greatest pleasure to sermons, and when no sermons had been prepared, his confessor, or the prior, would read to him the epistles of St. Paul and the writings of St. Augustine.

He was particularly devout to the Blessed Sacrament, and this devotion he carried to the length of leaving a codicil in his will, that a revenue should be established for its cult from his wealth.

He was a great lover of music, so much so, that he was always displeased if the divine offices were performed without organ accompaniment. Yet he would not permit that any but the monks should attend the choir, for which reason the Order sent fourteen of the best musicians they could muster among the monks to Yuste.

In respect of not permitting lay members to sing in the choir he was excessively severe, and on one occasion, the chroniclers recount, he himself ascended into the choir and expelled a tenor from Plasencia, who in every way was a worthy man. He was also most severe whenever he observed any want of reverence in the church, and he seemed like another Argus with a hundred eyes for detecting faults.

The monks would often request him to allow them to wait upon and serve him, considering

it a great honour if allowed to do so; but he would always decline, saying, "I have not come here to be served, but to serve God; and were it not that my infirmities do not permit me, I would have entered this house as a lay brother, and as such have performed menial offices."

There is one question enveloped in mystery which deserves to be noticed in this narrative, but upon which its author can throw but very little light. Philosophers and historians have exerted their most strenuous efforts to fathom it, and all the passions of the human heart have been joined to the investigating power of the critic in order to wrench from the tomb its secret. We refer to the question of the abdication of the emperor, and the reason for his resolute determination of renouncing the world and of spending the remainder of his life in a monastery.

What causes influenced that memorable act, which filled past ages with astonishment, and even in our days remains a subject for admiration?

What was the secret which prompted that

great dethronement, which will ever serve as an example for future generations?

Only God Almighty knows it.

That secret, if some of the historical reasons assigned do not sufficiently explain it, must have descended with its owner into the grave; for neither the Prior of Yuste—a man of deep probity, and whose narrative of the stay of the emperor in the monastery is of unimpeachable veracity—nor Fray Juan de Regla, his confessor, nor the Bishop Sandoval, whowas his chronicler, nor the erudite D. Juan Antonio de Vera y Zuñiga, nor even Luis Quijada himself, who was his bosom friend, and in whom he always placed unlimited confidence, were ever able to make themselves its depository, and so deliver it up to the judgment of posterity. All that has been written upon this question has never extended beyond mere conjecture. Poets impute love disappointments as the reason for the retirement of the emperor from worldly affairs; mystics assign penance as the cause; politicians ascribe it to state reasons; sceptics attribute it to the pride of his race, broken by the whole

world, which, they assure us, was fast coming down upon him; and his enemies refer it to remorse.

Do any of these versions merit any credit?

Of all the reasons which have been assigned, none appears more plausible than the one given by the emperor himself, when he made the act of abdication before the Diet of Brussels, and when, after the speech of the Chancellor Filibert, he arose, suffering great pain, and leaning on the arm of William Nassau, Prince of Orange, said, among other matters, "Up to this day I have neither ceased to act honourably nor have I spared myself. Germany I have crossed *nine times*, Spain *six*, Italy *seven*. *Ten* times have I come to these states. I have entered France *four* times; *twice* into England, and as many more into Africa. *Eight* times I have ventured on the Mediterranean, and, with this voyage which I intend to take now, I shall have crossed the Atlantic *four* times."

Does not this marvellous statistic of his warlike activity offer sufficient reasons to account for his desire of repose, his wish for

peace and quietude, in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and when his system, undermined already by gout and other chronic complaints, which at length carried him to the grave, was worn out and spent?

That to the resolution of abdication and of quitting the world were associated cruel disappointments may very probably have been the case, because disappointment is the base coin of humanity, which is ever passing current in the market of life, and by how much higher in position a man is—by how much more powerful—more likely is he to experience them; and by how much greater and nobler have been his efforts in distributing benefits, so much greater will be the ingratitude he meets in return, since it is well proved in the world that those who sow benefits will amply and abundantly reap disappointments.

He had already, in one of his last defeats, bitterly complained of fortune, that she *was a courtesan who petted the young and turned her back upon the old;* yet the loss of some insignificant lands could not have been the cause for renouncing the things of this life, because,

at the time when he signed the acts of abdication, it might be then truly said that he held in his hand the sceptre of the universe, and his head, three times crowned, could hardly sustain the weight of the government of his states, which he divided into two portions, one for his brother and the other for his son.

Therefore it seems more consistent with truth to ascribe his retirement from active life to his bodily and mental weariness—to his chronic ailments, to the failing of his spirit—brave and superior, it is true, but yet fragile—and to the noble impulses of his generous sentiments.

As regards the choice which he made of a monastery as an asylum for his premature old age, the chroniclers of his time say that during the lifetime of his consort, the Empress Isabella, *they had both made a vow of retiring to a convent with all the humility and simplicity of private individuals, a resolution which the emperor assured the monks of Yuste had not taken place, owing to the early death of the empress.* Therefore, doubtlessly as a consequence of having made that vow, the

emperor chose the retirement of Yuste, because twelve years before his abdication he had sent a commission of competent persons to seek in Spain for some residence which should join a beneficial climate and position. This commission, after mature deliberation and examination, decided upon the monastery of the order of Jeromites of Yuste, founded in 1410. The Cæsar then ordered a small dwelling to be constructed upon the plan of his palace of Ganté, where he was born, and in this modest abode he spent the remainder of his days.

Let us therefore respect the secret of his great and generous resolution, and let us bless this most noble example of abnegation and humility which he has offered future generations.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MONASTERY OF YUSTE AS IT STANDS AT THE PRESENT DAY.

In order that the reader may have a proximate idea of what the monastery of Yuste must have been in the olden time, we shall endeavour to describe it as it actually stands.

As we have already said, it is situated in the Vera de Plasencia, Province of Caceres, between the town of Cuacos and Garganta la Olla.

A lovely spot, which made the King Don Alonso exclaim, *Ut placeat Deo et hominibus;* and Rodrigo Mendez Silva, in his book on the towns of Spain, says that according to Strabo this was the spot on which stood the blissful Elysian Fields, and which signify the *place of the happy abode of the gods*, according to Homer. It is an extended garden, eighteen leagues in length, and adorned with all the

poetry which superb Nature, the incomparable work of the Supreme Artificer, can bestow.

Strabo also refers, in his narrative upon the Phœnicians, that Homer had visited Spain, and had said that neither in Europe nor in Asia had he ever beheld an expanse of country to equal the beauty of the Vera de Plasencia. We ourselves are inclined to credit this opinion, because the first who founded the ancient *Ambrasia*, now Plasencia, was a colony of Greeks, and it appears quite probable that Homer may have visited this spot, and assigned this part as the seat of the Gentile Paradise.

The Vera de Plasencia, in its short extent, unites the picturesque panorama of Switzerland with the temperate climate of smiling Italy, being, moreover, enriched with many fruits which quite equal those produced in the provinces of Valencia and Murcia.

A solid wall, nine feet high, surrounds the whole of the grounds belonging to the monastery and palace, which we shall describe.

The monastery and its dependencies constitute four blocks, which form a square;

the church stands in the centre. There are two entrances, one which leads to the monastery itself, and the other to the church and palace of the emperor.

The monastery has two cloisters, one very ancient and of a superior style and grandeur, the other modern, and of insignificant proportions.

The old part is situated on the east of the church, and is at the present day a heap of ruins, covered with ivy and blackberry-briars. Notwithstanding this wreck, the intelligent observer can discover in the ruins which still remain, and in the mere skeleton of its walls, overgrown as they are with moss and ivy, vestiges of great beauty and grandeur.

The emperor's palace, which is close to the church, is a building of brick and mortar, and is reached by an inclined mound. The first room presented to view is a wide and spacious vestibule, with an extensive balcony facing the south, which commands a view of the country nine leagues in extent, and another balcony on the west side, rather smaller than the first. This vestibule is square, and a beautiful foun-

tain stands in the centre, which was presented to the emperor by the noble city of Plasencia. Close to the fountain is a stone with two steps, from which it is said the emperor would mount his horse and leave the palace, riding down the inclined plane or mound. On the frontal wall a large escutcheon is sculptured in yellow, red, and blue, bearing the arms of Austria, Spain, and other possessions of the emperor. Also the Pillars of Hercules, with the motto, *Ne plus ultra*, under which is read the following inscription: "*His majesty Don Carlos V., our lord, was seated here when he was taken ill at four o'clock in the evening of the* 31*st of August. He died on the* 21*st September*, 1558, *at half-past two in the morning.*"

The superior apartments of the palace constitute a dining-room and three wide large chambers. One of these, which is close to the wall of the church where the high altar stands, the emperor chose for his use, and is so extremely plain, with its window barred with an iron grating, that it resembles more a Moorish dungeon than a comfortable room. This room opens to a plot of ground reserved

as a garden for the sole and private use of his majesty. His bed stood in this room, and a door was opened in the wall, from which he could hear Mass and receive the Pax to kiss. The emperor's garden is very beautiful, and full of fruit and poplar trees. At the foot of the vestibule is a small square pond, where he would occasionally amuse himself by fishing, under the shade of a grove of orange trees.

In this garden there is a little hermitage called "Bethlehem," which he frequented in the evening. This hermitage is very small, and contains only an altar. At its door is seen a luxuriant cypress which was planted by the emperor.

Behold all that remains of the once famous monastery of Yuste! But why mention in this book all the devastations which were there effected?

The French invasion and the civil wars have passed over the monastery of Yuste like sweeping nets, establishing within its boundaries the "Empire of Destruction."

CHAPTER IX.

RUY GOMEZ DE VARELA.

During one of his excursions through that peculiarly rocky, varied country, Barrientos came to the opening of a valley a few miles from Yuste, and encountered a troop of mountaineers, dressed in a rustic manner, who marched in file with peculiar gravity. Some were mounted, and others on foot.

The horsemen were encased in ancient armour, bearing huge lances and swords, and seemed to be returning from the wars.

The horses they rode were black as night, and the accoutrements of both horses and men were covered with rust, and which, carried carelessly, gave those men an appearance difficult to describe. Those on foot were clothed in coarse cloth suits, and caps made from the fur of mountain animals. On their

breasts they wore a species of blazon which Barrientos, notwithstanding his practised eye, could not at that distance distinguish what it could be.

A short distance in advance rode a veteran knight, attended by a noble youth; their chargers were spirited, and well caparisoned. These two knights offered the most strange and singular contrast. The one an old man, the other young—nay, almost a child. The old man was a perfect specimen of a robust athlete whose years could not have numbered less than ninety, and, were it not for his martial appendages, might well have been taken for a patriarch of Biblical times. His beard was white as snow, and of an extraordinary length; his hair, silvered like his beard, fell upon his shoulders in a thick mass; while his steel helmet, burnished like a mirror, and costly accoutrements distinguished him as one of no ordinary rank. Though evidently advanced in years, the ease with which he bore the weight of his weapons, and the dexterity he displayed in the management of his powerful war-steed, told of a frame which had not

yet lost its vigour. A long sword with a hilt in the shape of a cross and a Moorish dagger of exquisite workmanship, a perfect gem of Oriental art, hung from his side, and a tiger skin thrown over his shoulders afforded a fantastic effect to the whole.

Pedro Barrientos gazed upon this strange, formidable figure with a certain mute terror which prevented him from uttering a word, for, in his simple faith, he fully believed that such a man could not possibly belong to this world, judging by the antiquity of his armour, which belonged to other ages, and his physiognomy, truly spectral.

Barrientos imagined, and up to a certain point with truth, that before him stood one of the ancient warriors of the Cross—one of those who had flourished in the days of Alphonso the Warrior, of the Cid, and of Guzman the Good; and he strove to explain to himself the presence of such a phantom rising in that valley; of that figure, truly indescribable, unless it had become disentombed from some ancient sepulchre, and into which the Supreme Maker had breathed a vital spirit. Yet the astonish-

ment of Barrientos was not limited to the old warrior, for the young man offered him no less a subject of amazement, from the contrast, which appeared like the tender olive-branch that shoots by the side of the parent stem.

The youth was of graceful and manly bearing, olive complexioned, with dark lustrous eyes, and revealed one of those types in which Spanish blood has been mingled with the African, producing, in a marvellous manner, superior beings, which have ever won the admiration of all ages.

All that in the old man served to inspire respect from his imposing, terrible aspect of severity, contrasted in a strange manner with the softness, the intrepidity and winning ways of the youth. The nature of the old man appeared to be setting like the sun towards the west in the valley of death; that of the youth revealed itself in all the fulness of life, illumined by the brilliant refulgence of hope. Upon the brow of the one could plainly be read the words, "*I have lived;*" and upon that of the other shone hope, as though saying, "*I am going to live.*" The aged man, with uplifted eyes, was mutely

saying, "*They are awaiting me above.*" The youth, with downcast looks, appeared wrapped in the one thought, "*They are waiting for me here below.*"

Barrientos, absorbed in the mute contemplation of these dissimilar beings, fixed his gaze delightedly upon the youth, as offering a more pleasing impression than that produced by the austere, gloomy aspect of the old man. Their dress was as dissimilar as their ages. The young man was clothed in a magnificent suit of yellow buckskin, exquisitely worked, as was the fashion of those days; a handsome cap of crimson velvet, with hood of blue silk, encircled his black locks, which descended in waving curls to his shoulders. From his waist was suspended a Toledo blade of elaborate workmanship and a knife of extraordinary make.

The whole of this troop were rapidly traversing the valley towards a castle which stood at its furthest extremity. This valley was about a league in length, divided by a large stream, winding like a silver serpent. The vegetation of this oasis was perfectly oriental in its luxuriance and variety. The castle

was erected on a lofty and almost perpendicular crag, and surrounded by a mighty bulwark crowned with towers resembling stone giants, to whose guardianship had been entrusted that blissful land, that had received from the mighty hand of God such wondrous privileges. In its severe, massive fabric could be traced vestiges of the Roman, Gothic and Byzantine art, and the stronghold seemed to have been raised on that spot in order to defy the ravages of Time.

The sun, at that moment, was lighting up with its golden rays and vivid light the strong walls of this castle, and Pedro Barrientos, with the curiosity of a veteran soldier, was examining the grandeur of its outline, the solidity of the erection, the towers, which must have witnessed at a not very remote period the epic deeds of the Sons of the Cross in their combats against the Agareni during seven centuries.

A deep moat surrounded the fortress, and a drawbridge, with its corresponding portcullis, was the means of communication with the outer world. This was the "*Castle of the*

Devil," so called from an existing legend that it had been erected by his Satanic Majesty.

That fortress was the abode of the knight Ruy Gomez de Varela, the Lord of Pasaron, and his two grandchildren, the youth whom Barrientos had seen with the brave old man, and a charming girl called Magdalena.

Ruy Gomez de Varela had been a brave knight, and had fought in many battles. He was almost the only surviving Spaniard who had accompanied Isabella I. to the conquest of Granada, and it was Ruy Gomez who saved that famous queen from the flames when her tent caught fire in Santa Fé. He was then but twenty years of age, and it had been his proud privilege, at the command of the Marquis of Cadiz, to unfurl the holy standard of the Cross on the towers of Alhama and Granada. His son, the father of these two children, had, on some suspicion, been charged with treason, found guilty, and condemned to death. To save his son from the scaffold, the father drew up a petition to the emperor, in which he stated his services to his country, and begged, in consideration of his

long career of devoted loyalty, that the life of his son might be spared.

The emperor had already departed for Germany, and the sentence of death was carried into effect at Brussels before the emperor received the appeal. From the hour in which he witnessed his son perish by the hands of the executioner, Ruy Gomez had cherished a mortal hatred to the emperor. He never forgave him the death of his son, whom he judged should have been pardoned on account of the noble, heroic services rendered by the father. This Charles V. would most certainly have done, had the petition arrived in time, and although Ruy Gomez was aware of this, yet he never forgot his anguish nor the spectacle.

When the emperor returned to Spain, he received in Valladolid a message, after the ancient usage, from Ruy Gomez de Varela, in which he stated that he had served his God, his country, and her kings with honour; that the Agareni had spilt his blood many times when defending those dear objects; that God had given him a son, who of his own will

had strayed away, making himself a criminal worthy of death; that under the title of father he had appealed to him, reminding him that he had served under the flag of Isabella I., that he had fought along with Ponce de Leon and Gonzalo de Cordova; that he had besought the pardon of the culprit, and had been unable to obtain it. Therefore he withdrew his allegiance, resigned the career of arms, and would retire to his seignorial castle, simply retaining his lands.

Such a daring step from Ruy Gomez de Varela might have exposed him to most severe punishment; but the emperor, regarding solely the sorrows of the father, ordered that he should not be molested, unless he rose up in arms against the state and committed treacherous acts. But nothing could appease the rancour of this proud magnate; and ever since the emperor had come to reside in the Monastery of Yuste, he had refused to receive or hold any communication with any of its inhabitants.

Thrice had the emperor sent Luis Quijada to solicit the aged and sorrowing veteran to

grant him an interview, that he might establish clearly his innocence with reference to the death of his son. But on two occasions Ruy Gomez refused to see the envoy, and on the third, he mounted the boundary wall and spoke to him thus: "Tell your master that it is useless to trouble himself sending me emissaries. Let him suffer me to live in peace—to weep with my children. To no one does the sorrow and desolation of my heart offend. When the gibbet is raised, the family of the condemned turn away their gaze from the executioner. I am neither a traitor nor a rebel, and I only ask to be permitted to die in peace." Saying this he turned away, without waiting for a reply from Luis Quijada.

Oh, inexorable man! is there no human power that can soften thy stony heart?

It was this castle, it was its dwellers, whom the emperor dreaded should prove dangerous to John. This was the danger that Barrientos was ever to be on the watch to prevent the orphan boy from falling into its snare; it was this castle the emperor suspected to be the point of attraction for the daily evening excursions of John.

CHAPTER X.

THE SECRET.

John, with his high spirits and noble impulses, had deeply felt the constant supervision of the captain, who never left his side, and always accompanied him in his walks and excursions, and a gloomy shadow came over his sensitive nature.

Pedro Barrientos, with his fine, manly nature, commenced to wind himself round the affections of the noble youth whose guardianship had been confided to him by the emperor, and whom he perceived was oppressed by a secret melancholy. Some days after meeting the cavalcade of Ruy Gomez de Varela in the valley, John, in a moment of confidence, after exacting a promise from the knight that he should not repeat the matter to the emperor, said—

"You must know that not far from here there resides in an ancient castle a noble family with whom I am on terms of the greatest friendship. I had the good fortune of saving the life of the young Conrado, the grandson of the old knight who dwells in the fortress. One day the youth, carried away by his love of sport, pursued with his dogs a wild boar. The infuriated beast turned suddenly in his flight, and rushing at Conrado, who had thoughtlessly dismounted, threw him to the ground. At that moment I happened to be returning to the monastery, and was attracted by the barking of the dogs, who were unable to draw off the maddened animal from his prey. Perceiving the youth prostrate and bleeding, I rushed forward, and plunging my dirk with all my strength into the body of the boar, stretched him bleeding and gasping at my feet. The youth thus delivered by my hand from a cruel death has ever since been my dearest friend."

"You acted, in truth, a noble part, and are a brave and valiant youth!" exclaimed Barrientos.

"Thanks," replied John; "but I did no more than was my duty. Conrado arose pale and bleeding, threw his arms around my neck in gratitude, and implored me to be for ever his friend; and on that spot we pledged unto each other our faith to remain friends till death, and that whichever broke that promise should be execrated."

"But neither of you, I hope, has broken that promise?" asked Barrientos.

"No," replied John in an agitated voice; "but one of us does not comply with the holy laws of friendship."

"And which of you does not?" demanded Barrientos.

"I do not. Listen," said John; "Conrado, grateful for my having saved his life, insisted that I should accompany him to the castle, where he presented me to his grandfather and Magdalena, his sister, who overwhelmed me with kindness. The old knight questioned me, and desired to know my history, which I told him as I had done to you; and when he learned that I dwelt in the monastery with the emperor, and was his page, and the pupil of

Don Luis Quijada, I saw him turn deadly pale, and, in a voice that made me shudder, addressing me, said, "Child, you have saved my grandson's life, for which I am ever indebted to you. In other ages, better than these in which we live, gratitude was esteemed one of the noblest virtues by man, and he who was found wanting to its laws was deemed accursed. I lived in those ages, and for my misfortune I have reached the present ones; but I regulate my conduct by the maxims of former ages; therefore gratitude renders you sacred to me, and this castle, these lands, my life itself, belong to you. But if you come to visit the exiles of this valley, if you wish for our friendship, if you desire to enjoy the affection of my grandchildren, it must be on condition that you never come accompanied by any person from the monastery, nor ever speak to us of its inhabitants. Seek not from me further explanation. Without that promise we bid you farewell, as on those terms alone can you enjoy our friendship."

"A strange promise, in truth," remarked Barrientos; "and did you consent?"

"I did," replied John; "because by doing so I could harm no one."

"Well, I think you should have consulted some prudent person before consenting, because, in the exigencies of the old man, some mystery was implied which it would have been wise to have investigated."

"There is a mystery, no doubt, which they endeavour to conceal from me, but I have never manifested any curiosity to discover it," replied John.

"Then you have, since making that promise, visited the castle?" Barrientos asked.

"Yes, every day. Oh, Barrientos! if you only knew them! The old man is such a venerable patriarch; Conrado is so brave, generous, and docile; Magdalena an angel upon whom God seems to have lavished every grace! Was it possible to visit them and not love them?"

"True; yet I will venture to say," Barrientos replied, giving the youth a roguish look, "that of the three, Magdalena must have been the preferred one in your affections."

The orphan cast his eyes down to the ground,

and a bright flush suffused his countenance as he replied, "I love Magdalena as I would a sister."

"Now, tell me," Barrientos said, "is it long since you commenced to visit the castle?"

"About three months."

"And how do you occupy your time when you are with your friends?" asked Barrientos.

"I listen to the old man as he recounts his warlike exploits, and the battles and sieges through which he has passed, and to his wise maxims of prudence; or amuse myself practising fencing and martial exercises with Conrado, in presence of his grandfather, while Magdalena, with her sweet voice, sings and pours her melodies upon our hearts like a flow of harmony. And at times we sally out to breathe the pure air in the garden which surrounds the castle."

"None of these recreations appear to me to be dangerous," replied Barrientos; "but that resolve of the old man of not speaking to any resident in the monastery seems to me rather suspicious. Do you know whether they are heretics, and therefore averse to religion?"

"Indeed they are not heretics!" exclaimed the youth. "No, indeed, Señor Barrientos; for in the lower part of the castle they have a little chapel consecrated to our Lady of Help, and upon its altar flowers are never wanting, offerings of Conrado and Magdalena. Every night, the old man, his grandchildren, and the whole household assemble in the chapel and together they recite the rosary. Oh! it is a beautiful sight."

"This reassures me somewhat; because if they are devout and religious, they certainly cannot be perverse. What I wish to know is the reason why you told me you were wanting to the holy promise of friendship towards Conrado," Barrientos asked.

"Because since the day you came to the monastery I have not been to the castle," replied John.

"And who has prevented you?"

"Oh, Señor Barrientos!" cried John, grasping his hand, "will you be so good and kind as to allow me to visit them?"

"I see no reason for preventing you, provided I accompany you," replied Barrientos.

"How can you dare to propose such a thing to me, when you know that I must not approach the castle accompanied by any of the dwellers in the Monastery of Yuste?" angrily said John.

"Then I see no means of gratifying your wishes. I am a man of honour, and I have pledged my word to be ever at your side."

CHAPTER XI.

THE SICKNESS.

God, in His infinite goodness, has permitted that human nature should be so strong in the midst of its weakness, that in its frequent encounters with sorrow and pain it should generally prove the victor. Yet there is no stone, however hard, but is worn out by a constant drop of water falling upon it. Youth is a powerful bulwark for resisting the onslaught of suffering, yet a succession of sufferings can trample under foot health and break the poor human heart, in the same manner that an armed force can, by persistent attacks, break into the strongest fortress.

John fell ill. From the evening he had revealed his secret to the captain he had been confined to his room. A violent fever attacked him, which greatly alarmed the

physicians and his friends. The symptoms were dangerous in their nature. A deadly cold and shivering was succeeded by burning heat; then he would become delirious.

One paroxysm followed another, and the case was becoming complicated. The illness of John had cast a gloom upon the otherwise peaceful and tranquil abode, and all shared the emperor's anxiety for the patient. For, independently of the deep love and esteem which one and all felt for the orphan, the monks believed that some powerful motive, secret to all, was enclosed in the lively interest which the emperor evinced in John, and during the illness of the youth the emperor was in a fearful state of grief and desolation, which he vainly endeavoured to conceal, and his own seclusion, his forced severity, his mystic fervour, which in those moments of trial seemed to redouble, increased his inward pain with far greater force than if he carried his grief openly. He never left the youth's bedside during the long days and nights of danger. The monks trod the cloister with noiseless steps: sad and melancholy were they all from the moment

when he was taken ill. All loved him tenderly, for his gallant manner and winning ways had captivated their sympathies.

The day came when the fever rose to such an alarming height that it was feared he would succumb and fall a victim. Luis Quijada, who dearly loved the child, could no longer contain the terrible sorrow that overwhelmed him, and when speaking to the emperor he burst out in a flood of tears.

"What!" cried the emperor, grief stricken, "is there no hope of saving him?"

"Courage, sire, courage!" replied Quijada; "if the Almighty calls to heaven this noble creature, shall we mortals dare to oppose His divine Will?"

The emperor fell down on a seat as though a ray of lightning had struck him, and covered his face with his hands. "Unhappy child!" he exclaimed in trembling accents, "why did I take such delight in thy gifted mind and beautiful presence; why did I love that sweet smile of his, which was like a ray of sunshine in my spent, worn-out old age? Soon will those eyes be closed into which I have gazed

as on a mirror of my joy. Alas! soon will the smile of those dear lips be for ever gone, that so often blessed me. Ah, my God! would that I had the courage of another Job, to be able to say calmly and resignedly the sweet maxims of divine wisdom: '*The life of man upon earth is a warfare, and his days are like the days of a hireling.*'"

But the hours of the orphan's life were not yet numbered, and the sickle of death was not so soon to cut down the opening flower of his youth. A favourable crisis took place, and nature, assisted by the skill of the physicians, succeeded in triumphing over the disease.

In the midst of his delirium, when his life was in the greatest peril and his ravings were at their worst, he would pronounce two words clearly and distinctly; these words were "Conrado" and "Magdalena," and he would utter them so continuously and ardently, that the physicians took note of this, and sought an explanation from every one that was intimate with the youth.

Barrientos, who up to that time had kept profoundly secret what John had communi-

cated to him, judged that the moment had come when in conscience he ought to break his pledged word, and so save his life by informing the emperor of what had passed, and ask permission to be allowed to bring Conrado to his bedside, feeling certain this would be a means of restoring him to health, since the origin of his illness was his inability to see his friend freely.

The emperor, in the interview he granted Barrientos, after he heard the whole recital, replied that it would be useless to attempt such a thing; "for," he asked Barrientos, "are not Conrado and Magdalena the grandchildren of Ruy Gomez de Varela, who resides in the castle?"

"Yes, your majesty," replied Barrientos.

"Then, Señor Barrientos, you may desist from your endeavours, because he bears towards me a mortal hatred, and he will neither forget nor forgive."

"But," argued Barrientos, "is your majesty aware that John and Conrado pledged eternal friendship on the very first day they met? And could not I remind Conrado of this vow,

and apprise him of the dangerous state of his friend, and it would be the means of saving his life, as he had on another occasion saved his from the fierce wild boar, and thus overcome the hardness of the old man to accord his permission to come to the monastery?"

"Very well," replied the emperor; "you have my permission to do your best, and would to God that you could obtain an opening for a reconciliation with that noble family."

"When may I depart, please your majesty?"

"Go at once, and may God bless you! Go, generous heart! go, noble soul! and may Heaven recompense you and crown your efforts with success! And whilst you are on your errand of love, I will retire to kneel before the sanctuary, and beseech our Lord to give you His aid."

Barrientos withdrew, and the emperor slowly wended his steps towards the church.

CHAPTER XII.

MAGDALENA.

THE day was far advanced, and the sun shone brightly like a golden mirror: the streams were rippling in the valley, and around the castle reigned the majestic silence of nature. When Barrientos reached its gates, he plainly perceived three persons wandering in the garden within its boundary walls, who were evidently enjoying the charming beauty of that spot. One was an old man weighed down by years, a youth, and a girl gifted with beauty, innocence, and agility. The old man was Ruy Gomez de Varela, the Lord of Pasaron. The young people were Conrado and Magdalena.

Ruy Gomez, with his ninety years, his white hair, venerable beard, and vigorous athletic form, united the appearance of a patriarch of

the olden times with the warlike mien of the ancient Frankish kings. Conrado was a gallant youth, upon whose lofty brow could be read daring, valour, and power. Magdalena, on the contrary, was the type of meekness, sweetness, and innocence. Her figure, tall and slim like the palm tree, appeared at every movement to wave like a rose tree. In her fresh, open countenance the Divine Maker had spread the whiteness of snow and the tints of the carnation. Her eyes of pure crystalline blue, rivalling the lapis-lazuli, were an index of the goodness and serenity of a soul which was destined to bestow around her tenderness, purity, and generosity. Her tresses, golden like full-ripe ears of corn, served as a frame for that bewitching countenance. Yet it was not alone physical beauty that enhanced Magdalena. It were vain to decorate a form with every material ornament of beauty if that form is robbed of soul, or rather, if the soul it bore within itself was like the worm which, as is the case with some fruits beautiful to the eye, lies hidden in its core.

Physical beauty may adorn herself with material riches: she may carry pearls in her mouth, ruby on her lips, upon her cheeks roses and lilies, in her eyes jet, and silken threads in her hair; she may possess a throat full and round like a column of jasper, her hand may be shaped from the purest alabaster, and her foot be worthy of a sylph; she may robe herself in purple and velvet, and in the delicate fabrics from the looms of Cashmere—cover herself with costly lace and precious stones, deck herself with the finest pearls of Guzarate, or the richest diamonds of Golconda;—but if to all this material beauty loveliness of soul be wanting, she will be like the apple of Sodom, the rind of which was beautiful and lovely to the eye, but which had a core black as coal.

In Magdalena—in the daughter of the solitary valley—physical beauty was but an accident: moral beauty was the soul of her being, or, better said, it was her whole being. Meek and chaste as a dove, innocent like a child, simple and sweet like the young goldfinch that feeds from the hand of its master, had

any of the pagan poets seen her flitting about the valley in the twilight, they would have taken her for one of the symbolical divinities of those fabulous times, and had the Oriental poets watched her in the garden of that seigniorial dwelling, stroking the rosebuds, they would have invested her with the fulsome title of the "sister of the flowers."

The inhabitants of the valley and its neighbourhood, without being poets, had bestowed upon her an appellation more in harmony with the beauty of her soul than all that has been dreamed of by the apologists of sylvan deities and the great singers of Oriental voluptuousness: they called her the "fair haired angel;" and this sweet epithet of Christian piety seemed as though it would attract more towards heaven that stainless creature, born perhaps to obtain the immortality of virtue.

The people called her by that name, because in her virginal chaste bosom piety, charity, tenderness, and goodness were blended and flowed in streams around her, and under her influence every human sorrow was in such a manner softened, that it seemed as though

beneath her very footprints flowers would spring up and thorns disappear; and the roughness, nay, ferocity, of the old man, and the rustic spirit of the younger one, were quelled whenever the melodious voice of the virgin of the valley sounded in their ears, and, like a sacred lyre, would vibrate the mysterious chords of their nobler sentiments. She was, in one word, a saintly creature, peaceful and peacemaker, indulgent, pure, and generous.

In her soul she united the sweetness of the Spouse of the Canticles, the candour and innocence of Eve before her fall, and the fortitude of the valiant woman of the Bible.

Her accents were soft, like the notes of the nightingale, and her words came forth from her lips with all the harmony of a celestial harp. Those lips were never opened but to breathe words of comfort, of pardon, of love, and of charity.

In those times books of Christian lore were very rare; there were, however, some manuscript devotional ones, due to the patience of the monks, and of indisputable merit. From this rare scanty store of books on Christian

doctrine, she, like a laborious solicitous bee, would suck in the rich honey of Christian truth, perfumed with the sweet fragrance deposited in them for man by the divine wisdom of the Saviour.

Magdalena, who had been well instructed in spiritual things by a priest, and versed in the essential truths of religion, was listened to by both men as to an oracle.

The old knight oftentimes would complain of the heavy cross of sufferings and sorrow laid upon him, and Magdalena, caressing him, would say, "Dearest father, have courage and let me see you smile. The cross, since it was borne by divine Shoulders, is no longer heavy for any one to carry."

Frequently would he order some one of his household to be punished for faults more or less grave, and then Magdalena would always interpose, saying, "Forgive them; I will answer for their amendment."

A number of children from the adjacent villages were in the habit of coming to the castle on Fridays to receive the abundant alms she bestowed, and, as a matter of course, would,

childlike, make much noise, which sometimes annoyed the old man, who would come out to them in a rage and order them away and the dogs to be set upon them; but Magdalena would obtain a revocation of the order saying, "Oh, beloved father! let the little ones come in to you; do you not remember how dearly Jesus loved them?"

The old man believed in the absurd justice of the laws of vengeance, and often would he say that it was just to return evil for evil, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth; but Magdalena would reply that it was not just, and that it was a holy act to return good for evil, and that were his enemy to strike him, to return and give him the other cheek—that to do good to one who has not offended was meritorious, but to do good in return for an evil deed was a thing worthy of Heaven itself. The old man would listen spellbound to her words, and yield to her will with the docility of a child, whilst Conrado would gaze upon his sister with all the respect he would manifest towards a celestial being.

Magdalena therefore was the angel of good

in that mansion of misfortune. She was the tutelary divinity of the surrounding neighbourhood—the delight of the aged grandfather, and the dispenser of all the moral good enjoyed within the precincts of that solitary castle.

One year younger than Conrado, and bereft of parents at an early age, the old man had taken charge of them, bestowing upon them from their tenderest years, his paternal solicitude, and they, in return, had consecrated to him their filial piety.

In the history of that family a dreadful drama had taken place, which, though ignored by them in their childhood, they had become acquainted with in their youth. That episode had inspired different feelings in the breasts of these two beings. Conrado felt wrath, hatred, desires and thirst for vengeance against the murderers of his father. Magdalena was pained, distressed, sad, yet full of commiseration.

The old knight would behold with pleasure the wrath of Conrado against the executioners of his family; but when he heard words of mercy and pardon from the lips of Magdalena,

he felt in his inmost heart an unspeakable mitigation of sorrow, and experienced a joy that was well nigh seraphic.

It was during such moments as these we have described that these three dissimilar characters were seen by Barrientos when he approached the castle. They were engaged in a conversation that has much to do with the interest of this legend.

The old man was walking between his grandchildren, leaning upon their arms. Conrado was carefully removing every briar from his path, and Magdalena was culling flowers, which she presented to him with an inimitable grace.

"My dear children," he was saying, "I know that death will be in my regard a heavenly grace, because it will grant me a desired rest; but God has permitted that my life should be so enjoyable in your society, that, after ninety years of bitter sorrow, I regret quitting it. Yet I feel that the moment of separation is fast approaching."

"My dearest father, do not dwell on such subjects," Magdalena replied, "but think on

the bliss God bestows on us. It is so sweet to carry the weight of your years, that we never judge ourselves more happy than when we feel upon our shoulders the loving contact of your venerable age. Look at that beautiful sun! Look at those flowers—are they not lovely? Does not the love of your children gladden you?"

The old man raised his eyes to heaven in profound gratitude, and in a low voice said, "My God! is her voice that of one of Thine angels? Oh, dear child! how sweet you render my life with your amiable beauty and virtues!"

Conrado conducted the aged man to a seat and sat down by his side, whilst Magdalena, at his feet, rested her beauteous head on the old man's knees. "Come," he said, passing his aged hand through her lovely hair; "come, speak to me now, and tell me some of those beautiful things that come from your lips like honey from the honeycomb."

"Are you happy now, grandfather?"

The old man smiled as he said, "How else could I be but happy? But you have set your

mind that this happiness is to be eternal, and that you know, my child, cannot be."

"I know it," she replied; "but our good God Who watches over us will prolong your days to their utmost; and do you not think that a pure felicity, such as ours is, must be everlasting?"

"Yes," answered the old man, perfectly fascinated; "but there is no complete bliss in this world, and ours will surely come to an end."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MESSAGE IN GOD'S NAME.

THEIR conversation had reached this point when Beranguer de Rotron, the principal mayordomo of the castle and the ancient lance-bearer of Ruy Gomez, presented himself before this group, and removing his velvet cap, said—

"Señor, the *Austrian* sends your excellency a new message!" Beranguer bore such hatred towards the emperor that he never styled him otherwise than the "German" or the "Austrian."

"A message from the emperor!" exclaimed Ruy Gomez, "and pray, what may he require?"

"I know not," replied Beranguer; "but at the wicket of the gate is an old fanfaron called Pedro Barrientos, who styles himself captain of the king's body-guards, and is at present in

the service of this Austrian, and he is very importunate to see your excellency. He says he comes from the little page of the Austrian, and desires you to listen to him in God's Name."

"Tell him it is impossible," the old man said in a hard voice. "Run, Beranguer, tell him no dweller at the monastery can ever cross the threshold of this house."

"Grandfather," Conrado said, "this man comes in the name of John."

"Of John, who is in danger," added Magdalena.

"And, moreover, asks you to listen to him in God's Name," continued Conrado.

"When God's Name is invoked, creatures should open the doors of their hearts to compassion and charity," put in Magdalena.

"John saved my life, grandfather," said Conrado.

"And John is now in peril of life," insisted Magdalena.

The old man could no longer resist such pleading, and replied, "Do you wish me to see him, my children?"

The two young people bowed their heads in token of assent.

"Let it be, then, as you will!" cried the old man. "For the first time in my life I am wanting to the most sacred resolution I have ever taken; but your pleadings have awakened in my heart charity and gratitude."

He turned to the mayordomo, and said, "Conduct the captain to the great reception-room of the castle."

"Thanks, father," Conrado said, kissing the old man's hand.

"For this noble sacrifice I ask from you an embrace," added Magdalena.

The old man smiled. "Have I been able to afford you any pleasure? Happy me, that can yet do so!"

Ruy Gomez de Varela, accompanied by his grandchildren, proceeded to receive the captain. On entering the reception-room he said, "These are my children: from them I have no secrets; therefore speak and say whatever you will."

"My mission is a brief one," replied Barrientos. "In the Monastery of Yuste

there lives a youth who is united to your grandson by the bonds of an honest, pure friendship. This youth has been, and is still, in danger. In the midst of his sufferings he manifests but one desire, and that is of seeing Conrado, to press his hand and hear his voice. May Conrado satisfy his noble desire?"

"No!" gruffly replied Ruy Gomez; "my grandson cannot go to the monastery. Do you know what you ask?" he cried fiercely; "do you know you are asking a family, made wretched by sorrow, the sacrifice of all their recollections, of all the memories of a dreadful past? My children and myself bear towards the youthful invalid the tenderest affection; we would wish to fly to his bedside, and even impart our own health and strength to him; but a wide sea of blood separates the monastery from this castle, and that sea we could not cross without infamy."

Barrientos was appalled by those terrible words. Yet, before departing, wishing to leave nothing undone and untried, he turned and appealed to the sensibilities of Conrado, and said, "Noble youth, can you passively consent

that your friend should die, without adding your supplications to mine in order to soften the heart of this old man?"

Conrado, tenderly moved, said, "Grandfather, may I not go for once to the monastery?"

"Impossible!" replied Ruy Gomez.

"Impossible!" cried Magdalena bitterly; "then, grandfather, it is impossible to act well. Is it possible God can take pity upon our miserable humanity? Unhappy is the being whose heart is not touched by gratitude. Alas, for the creature who knows not how to make a sacrifice for the suffering one, and who flies from the cross of suffering! 'He who would follow me to the kingdom of heaven,' said Jesus Christ, 'let him take up his cross and follow Me.' He who is not grateful, men of honour say, is a low, mean person. Has all this been said and written in vain, father?"

Pedro Barrientos listened to Magdalena as though her voice had something divine in its sound.

The grandfather, in a gloomy voice, murmured, "I cannot give in; the sacrifice is greater

than my strength. The blood of my son burns in my heart like molten lead, and I do not even feel obliged by the laws of gratitude to perform this act of sacrifice."

"Father," Conrado said, "John saved my life!"

"Grandfather, Jesus on the Cross forgave His executioners!" added Magdalena.

"We have sworn eternal friendship," said the youth, "and do you wish me to be a perjurer?"

"The tiger takes vengeance on his enemies," said Magdalena; "the treacherous serpent inflicts a deadly wound upon the one that attacks it. Is man a wild beast? Oh, beloved father, remember Jesus Christ! Take vengeance of thine enemy, says the letter which kills; love him who does not love you, says the gospel."

"Moreover, John is innocent," exclaimed Conrado.

"And above all," cried Magdalena, "God is our Judge, and life is short. Who will dare appear before Him with a face livid with vengeance?"

Barrientos, who could no longer contain himself, with streaming eyes and a voice broken with sobs, cried out, "Señor, your breast must be made of hard oak that it is not moved by the voices of these noble creatures. Oh, rich, noble, generous hearts! may you be blessed by God as you are blessed by this rough soldier!"

"It is enough," exclaimed the old man, rising up in great agitation and stretching out his arms to Magdalena; "you have conquered, beautiful and saintly child! Yours is the triumph, as sure as heaven will be your portion."

Then he turned to Barrientos, and with brimming eyes said, "Fly, captain, to the monastery, and ask the emperor permission to bring John hither; in this castle his health will soon be restored. The soft breeze of the valley will strengthen him. The affection of my children will inspire sweet sensations. Conrado and myself will await him on the limits of this valley and bring him hither, where under my roof he will be as safe as in a sacred spot. Do you not think, captain,

that in this way we can arrange matters and conciliate all parties?"

Barrientos raised his eyes to heaven and a prayer came from his heart, an act of gratitude, "My God, I thank Thee!"

"Give John an embrace from me," Conrado said at parting to Barrientos.

"And you, beautiful child," the captain said, turning to Magdalena; "you, who have done so much for the poor invalid—you who have received from God the gifts of softening and persuading—have you no message to send John?"

Magdalena coloured like a rose as she bent her eyes to the ground, softly saying, "Give him this flower." And taking a pure white lily from a nosegay she had culled, she gave it to Barrientos.

The captain mounted his horse, and swiftly sped across the valley towards the monastery.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PILGRIM.

When Barrientos arrived at the monastery the emperor was impatiently awaiting him, and in order to converse more at ease and not be overheard, they both retired to the garden.

Barrientos recounted in detail all that had taken place, which overjoyed the emperor, and he exclaimed, "Blessed be God! This is the commencement of a reconciliation. Shall we be so fortunate as to obtain it?"

"Yes, sire," replied Barrientos; "those two young people are good angels, and the old man can deny them nothing. Oh, if your majesty had but witnessed that scene! The world does not hold nobler hearts than theirs. Please, sire, allow John to go to the valley, and God will do the rest."

"But, Barrientos, if he goes to the castle they will not allow me to visit him. This would be a terrible sacrifice; moreover, would it not be imprudent to expose his life by placing him in the power of a man who bears me such an implacable hatred?"

"No, sire; for he has pledged me his word of honour that his life will be as safe there as in a sanctuary. And in Spain it is a thing unknown for a knight to be wanting to his pledged word and to the sacred, inviolable laws of hospitality."

"Then go to his room, captain, and tell him I consent to his removal to the castle."

A few days after, John had so far recovered that he was able to leave the monastery and proceed to the castle; but his convalescence, notwithstanding the softness and benign air of the valley, the solicitude and tender care of its dwellers, proved longer than had been expected. Some months elapsed, and the year 1557 came to a close, yet John still remained at the castle; and during all this time the emperor had not once seen him, as only Barrientos was allowed to visit him.

Spring succeeded winter, yet John lingered in the castle.

In the early part of the year 1558 the emperor's health began visibly to decline, and the monks clearly perceived that his life would not prove a long one; yet no persuasions could induce him to lessen his austerities and the rigour of his penitential life.

The war between Spain and France had just commenced, and as Spain was calling upon her sons to enlist in defence of their country, the emperor decided that as John was restored to health, he should respond to the call of the country and commence his military career.

Charles V. sent Luis Quijada on a special mission to the King Felipe II., in order to obtain his assent and the requisite documents for creating John an Infante of Spain, under the title of Don Juan de Austria.

On the return of Luis Quijada with the ratification, the emperor sent Pedro Barrientos to inform John of his designs, and that before proceeding to the wars he should come at

once to the monastery to be knighted by the emperor himself.

This resolution of parting with John cast a gloom over the monastery, and filled with grief the dwellers of the castle, for he was tenderly loved by all.

One evening, Ruy Gomez de Varela, Conrado, John, and Magdalena, were assembled in the large dining-hall of the castle about to partake of their evening repast. The night was dark and cold. The hearth had been replenished with huge logs of wood. The table was spread, and Ruy Gomez took his seat at the head of the table, whilst the rest, including his whole household, as was the custom in those good old times, took their places according to rank at the table. Just as the old man was about to say grace, Pedro Barrientos presented himself at the threshold of the apartment. The captain was accompanied by a pilgrim, one of the many that traverse that part of the country when proceeding to Santiago de Compostella.

The pilgrim was furnished with a staff and coarse wallet, his wide-brimmed hat was

covered with medals and relics, and an ample loose garb of coarse cloth covered him from head to foot. His face was concealed by a thick black mask, a not unusual occurrence in those days, when many pilgrims made vows of not manifesting their countenances until their return from visiting the sepulchre of the holy patron saint of Spain.

Barrientos, cap in hand, advanced towards the Castilian knight, who had risen to receive them, and said, "I have come to ask your hospitality for to-night. It is necessary that John should leave your abode, and return by midday to-morrow to the monastery. I have come with only one servant."

"This dwelling, captain," replied the old man in a friendly tone, "is always at the service of whomsoever asks hospitality. Whenever a guest comes to the castle, I judge he is sent by God. Judge, then, what must be my pleasure to-night, when the guest sent by God is no other than yourself."

"I thank you for your kindness, señor, but I do not come alone. Before reaching the castle I met this pilgrim, who had strayed

from the road and had lost his way; he has made a vow of not uncovering his face until the end of his pilgrimage. As the night was far advanced, and it was almost impossible to direct him to the monastery, I, in your name, offered him a shelter in this castle, on the supposition that it would be agreeable to you to receive him."

"Shelter and food he shall have in my house," replied the old man, "and a bed to rest upon."

The pilgrim advanced towards the old knight, and endeavoured to kiss his hand in sign of gratitude; but this the patriarch would not permit, but on the contrary, he embraced him, saying, "You have no occasion to kiss my hand, because I simply grant you what you have a right to demand. To me is due that I should kiss yours, because you are a penitent, and have come assisted by the grace of God." He then took the pilgrim by the hand, and conducted him to a seat reserved for guests, and bade Barrientos seat himself also.

During the whole time supper lasted the

pilgrim never once opened his lips to utter a syllable.

Supper over, the aged grandfather, his grandchildren, the guests, and the entire household, proceeded to the little chapel on the basement of the castle, and Barrientos, as they traversed the different apartments, commenced to speak more in detail upon the approaching knighting of John, and this induced the old man to speak more fully about his trials and sorrows, of his family and the vicissitudes that had come upon them, and this led him to speak of the emperor. Conrado, who had scarcely joined in the conversation, when the subject of the emperor was mentioned, cried out in a voice wrathful and bitter, "It was the emperor who was the assassin of my family—do not speak of him!"

"'Tis false!" exclaimed a voice behind the aged Castilian. They all turned in the direction of the voice to ascertain who had spoken that daring negative.

The pilgrim advanced to the centre of the group, and repeated to Conrado, "'Tis false!

The humble monk of Yuste was not the executioner of your father!"

"Prove it then!" cried Conrado.

"I *shall* prove it," replied the pilgrim in a calm voice. "Would it convince you, and be a sufficient proof, were the Emperor Charles V. to swear on the tomb that contains the remains of your father that he had been unable to pardon him, because ere he was apprised of his condemnation the sentence of death had been already carried into effect?"

"Yes, that would suffice," replied the youth.

The pilgrim, who up to that moment had remained covered and disguised, then removed his hat and mask, threw off his cloak, and extending his arms as though about to command the whole world, glanced around him with indescribable pride and majesty, and exclaimed—

"Listen to me, all of you: I am the Emperor Charles V.!"

Ruy Gomez was overcome with astonishment, and was scarcely able to support his aged limbs from falling down. Conrado

turned deadly pale ; Magdalena crossed her hands and bent down her head. The emperor advanced towards the latter, saying, "Amiable child, to you is due my coming to this castle! I congratulate you on your many good deeds!" then, turning to the assembled group, cried out, "Knights and grandees of the house of Varela, follow me to the vaults where lie the remains of your family."

With lofty brow, and head erect as though he carried upon it the crown of universal monarchy, arrogant and proud as though he wore the imperial mantle upon his shoulders, he slowly left the tower and proceeded to the mausoleum where the ashes of the last scions of that noble family had been deposited.

"Ruy Gomez, are these the sepulchres of your children?"

"Yes, sire," replied the old man.

The emperor made the sign of the Cross, laid his hand upon the tomb, and said—

"We, Charles of Augsburg, Emperor of Germany and King of Spain, we swear by Jesus Christ crucified that we were unable to prevent the execution of the sentence passed

upon your son, and that had we received in time the petition made to us by Ruy Gomez, invoking our clemency, in which petition we were reminded that he had saved the life of Isabella I., and that you, Ruy Gomez, had been the first soldier who unfurled the standard of the Cross upon the towers of Granada, we would have pardoned your son, however great a rebel or traitor he might have been. To this we pledge our royal word."

"Oh, sire!" cried the patriarch of the valley, "this is more than we had a right to expect. We are unworthy of your majesty's pardon."

The emperor approached Ruy Gomez, saying, "Old man, I was aware of your hatred against me, and I could have punished you. I could have levelled your castle to the ground; but you wept for your son, and a father's tears are sacred and powerful."

"Your majesty was aware of my resentment, yet you mastered your vengeance?"

"Old man," replied the emperor, "I conquered the fierce Barbarossa, I vanquished

Dragut and Francis I., I overcame the Dukes of Cleves and of Gueldres; and was not I to master my own self? Blessed be God, Who is the author of all. Permit me once more, for a brief moment, to be still in your presence the Emperor Charles V." Saying this, he drew from his pocket a parchment deed, sealed with the royal seal, and added, "In the name of my son, the king, I return to you, Ruy Gomez, and to your successors, all the lands and titles confiscated, or rendered void on account of the sentence fulminated against your firstborn in punishment of his rebellion and treachery."

"Charles V.," exclaimed the old man, "why have I not before this appreciated and enjoyed the delight of thy immortal greatness, and given up my senseless resentment!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST FAREWELL TO THE VALLEY.

The bells of the monastery were ringing a joyous peal, evidently announcing some grand ceremony.

The church was decked with rich tapestries as on great festivals; the whole community had been invited by the emperor to assist at High Mass.

John was to be knighted with all possible solemnity. A richly ornamented table was placed in the sanctuary. Upon this table was laid a sword of costly make, a helmet of polished steel, ornamented with gold and silver, a set of gold spurs of great value, and a number of warlike appendages.

When Prior Angulo was about to commence the Holy Sacrifice, the emperor entered the chancel, accompanied by John, Conrado, Don

Luis Quijada, D. Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, and other knights and grandees of Spain.

The organ began to peal in magnificent strains, a cloud of incense rose up, filling the church, and holy Mass began. After the Gospel, Fray Juan de Regla ascended the pulpit and delivered a short but eloquent discourse, in which he reminded his noble hearers that during the space of seven centuries the glories of the cross had been the only aim and the desire of Spanish warriors. When Mass was over, the prior blessed the arms; the emperor then stood up took the sword from the table, and bade John approach. The gallant youth, who was attired in a splendid robe of crimson silk embroidered in gold, rose up, and with a countenance flushed with joy advanced and knelt down at the emperor's feet, who conferred upon him the dignity of knighthood, pronouncing the usual words of investiture, "Don Juan, rise up a knight."

Conrado then adjusted the gold spurs, Pedro Barrientos placed the helmet on his head, Luis Quijada fastened on the collar and

bracers. The emperor then addressed him in these words, "I present you with this sword, which was mine, Don Juan; it possesses no other merit than that it has never been drawn but for some good motive, and never put back in its sheath but with honour. Keep it in remembrance of me; let the cross on its hilt remind you that you are a Christian, and its blade that you are a knight."

The *Te Deum* was solemnly sung, and he then received the congratulations of all who witnessed the ceremony.

That same evening John, robed in his dress as knight, proceeded, accompanied by Conrado, to the castle in the valley to bid its inmates farewell.

The aged, venerable patriarch blessed him, and Magdalena, though deeply grieved, rose to an heroic resignation. John was to leave on the following day to join the forces under the standard of D. Lopez de Figueroa, encamped near Valladolid. At the moment of quitting the castle the old man threw his aged arms around his neck, saying, "Noble youth, I shall never see you again, for my days are

numbered; but you carry with you my esteem and my blessing."

When he turned to bid adieu to Magdalena, the youth felt heart-broken, and feared his courage would desert him. The virgin of the valley was pale, stricken with sorrow, like the victims of olden times who were carried to be sacrificed crowned with garlands of roses.

"Farewell, Magdalena!" sobbed the young man. And she, smiling through pain, endeavoured to disguise her feelings; and with bosom heaving under untold agony, she raised her eyes to heaven in sublime resignation, as though she wished to say, "I shall wait for you above."

John flew from the castle, his heart pierced by the thorns of that cruel farewell, and crossed the valley spurring his charger at full speed.

"Let us fly—let us quit these scenes, which call up in my mind illusions and dreams of love, of hopes lost, for never can they be realised."

When he reached the turning of the road,

where the hill shuts out the view of the castle, he, like Lot's wife, could not resist looking back, and, like that sinner punished for her curiosity, he felt his heart turn cold as stone. Upon the highest tower, on the most commanding spot of that seigniorial castle, stood the solitary virgin of the valley, that wounded dove, widowed and orphaned, who in silence was weeping over the demise of the first, the only passion of her youth. From that height, where she appeared nearer to heaven than to earth — white and pure, like a mysterious priestess of sorrow; with bent head, like the lily broken in the stem; misty, angelical, sad, like one of those flowers which bloom in the crevice of a ruined wall—she was following with her sweet looks and the fragrant incense of her prayers the fast retreating form of John.

"Magdalena! Magdalena! Magdalena!" exclaimed John three times, "farewell for ever!" And bursting into a flood of tears, he frantically spurred his horse, as though he wished to stifle the sobs rising from his heart. Once more he turned, but the enchanting

vision had disappeared for ever. Nothing remained but its imperishable record in the memory of the orphan, recollections which were never blotted out during his life.

At daybreak the following morning Conrado, the faithful friend of the valley, came to the monastery to bid John a last farewell and accompany him to a neighbouring town, where they parted.

"John," said Conrado, "when my grandfather dies I feel sure my sister will enter a convent, as I think a religious life is her vocation; and then, when I shall have left her under the protecting shadow of the cloister, I shall go to the war and seek you; and then God will grant me the joy of proving to you how great and sincere is my friendship."

"I fondly hope we shall meet again," replied John, "and, believe me, it will indeed be a happy day for me."

A short time before John left the monastery, Luis Quijada conducted him to the emperor, who desired to speak to him.

Charles V. was standing when he entered, and turned deadly pale. "Come here, my

son," he said, "and listen for the last time to my words. Up to this day I have spared no pains or expense in order to educate your heart. You are noble, be also honourable. You can do much good in the world, therefore turn every moment to good account. Unhappy the man who does not make good use of his time, and dedicates to evil-doing moments which should be employed in the exercise of virtue. My heart expects much from you; oh that my hopes may be realised! I admonish you never to allow the love and fear of God to be weakened in your soul, for they are the mainsprings of the noblest and most generous actions. In all the perils and dangers of life think upon God, and you will always feel fortified by His Divine Spirit. John, will you promise me to be a good Christian?"

"I solemnly promise it, your majesty, on the salvation of my soul."

"You will then be great," replied the emperor, gazing fondly upon him. "When you came to join me in the monastery, I had intended you should never leave me; but

I thought better upon it, and I judged I had no right to impose such a sacrifice."

"Oh, sire, it would have been no sacrifice to have lived always at your side!"

"Yes, John, it would have been a great sacrifice," the emperor rejoined bitterly. "I am but a dead man, buried in life, whom the world no longer remembers, and were I to retain you with me, you would remain poor and obscure. For this reason do I cast you upon the world and send you to the wars, that when Fortune flings upon you her favours, you may have rendered yourself worthy of them, and even shine more than those who may endeavour to eclipse you. Some future day you will comprehend the prevision enclosed in this determination, and then you will appreciate my sacrifice and bless my memory."

"The remembrance of your majesty," replied John, "will ever be sacred to me."

"May God reward you, John, and now, my son, receive my blessing, which I bestow upon you."

The youth knelt down, and with bent head

received the emperor's blessing, who then raised him up and tenderly embraced him.

That scene, witnessed only by Heaven, and totally ignored by the world, had a depth of sublime feeling impossible to describe. That man who had made the universe tremble; that Colossus who had held in his hand the dominion of the globe; that superior spirit whose fortitude had drawn towards him the eyes of the whole world—offered a strange contrast of tenderness in that narrow apartment, as he clung to the neck of a youth, and poured upon his shapely head the tears of an affection unknown to the world.

"John, oh, John!" cried the emperor, "remember me, and pray to God to pardon my sins. Act always honourably, for my sake, and may you be happy."

When the youth left the emperor, Luis Quijada and Barrientos entered, and found him on his knees at the foot of the crucifix, weeping bitterly. His faithful friends approached him, saying, "Courage, sire, courage," and assisted him to rise.

"Captain Barrientos," the emperor said

"to your care I commend John: watch over him as if he were your own child. To you, and to Don Luis Quijada, I confide this noble youth. You, Barrientos, will accompany him, and Luis Quijada shall remain here until my death, after which he will rejoin you and John, and fulfil my instructions. Barrientos, I shall never forget you, good, faithful friend; take from the Emperor Charles V. all he can give you." And he embraced him closely and tenderly.

At the doors of the monastery all the monks, and the whole of the emperor's household had assembled to bless and bid John adieu, for he had endeared himself to them all with his noble winning ways.

When they left the monastery walls, John turned his eyes towards the palace. The emperor was standing on the balcony of the vestibule, watching the departure. John and Barrientos saluted him, and he, raising his hand to heaven, said in a low voice, "Farewell, until we meet in heaven."

The royal penitent, overwhelmed with grief, took refuge in the sanctuary, and poured out

his grief at the foot of the altar in those sublime words of David: "*O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, oh how many ways!*"

The monks saw him kneeling for hours in silent prayer, but no one attempted to disturb that fervent, great contrition which had chosen God for its confidant.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

Some months after the departure of John, his accustomed ailments began to increase in violence, and the health of the emperor commenced visibly to decline. He dragged on a miserable, languid existence; and although prayer and meditation were ineffable medicines for his soul, yet his body, weakened by vigils and mortifications, would find itself unable to sustain what he termed *conversations with God*. His one incessant aim, his continued and vehement aspirations, were to consecrate every moment of his remaining life to God because, as he used to say to those around him, "when he removed his eyes from God he would have to fix them upon the world, and the world reminded him of his past life, which had been so strewn with sorrow." Yet

in his sadness there was a gentle resignation which told of the spirit of sacrifice within, for in the midst of his bodily sufferings he was observed to become daily more benign and indulgent under the vivifying influence of religion, which refreshed his soul and healed his wounds. Where before he had shown himself severe and taciturn, he now manifested himself indulgent and resigned, and though he never broke through the limits of a dark reserve, yet that reserve was full of sweetness and benevolence. The monks, keen and penetrating, could clearly perceive a brave Christian conformity shining most brightly in his last days, as though fed by a divine fire.

His great delight was to converse with the dwellers at the castle. Conrado visited him frequently, and the emperor would keep him for hours at his side; and when Ruy Gomez came to him, he would order a comfortable arm-chair to be placed close to his own, and dismissing his attendants, would remain alone with him, finding comfort and pleasure in his society. Often would he say to him,

"Ah, Ruy Gomez! who would have thought that you, with the weight of ninety years upon your shoulders, should be the one to come and visit me, and I, scarcely sixty, should not be able to ride to your castle?"

"Ah, sire!" the old patriarch would reply; "but your majesty has done more than all the monarchs of Spain together, and engaged in undertakings worthy of giants; what wonder that your majesty should feel worn out?"

"It is true that I took Tangiers, levelled Goleta, vanquished Dragut and Barbarossa, who were wolves of the forest; but were you not the renowned soldier of the Alhama and the Alpujarras? But look at this frame," continued the emperor, "weak and exhausted, and compassionate this giant of fifty-eight years, who now would tremble at the voice of a child. To this are reduced the glories of the world! Six feet of earth places all mankind on a level. Had I thought in earlier days of all this as I now do, I would have exchanged all the crowns of the universe for that white diadem of venerable grey hair that crowns your brow, and which is so beautiful in my

eyes, because worked by God! Believe me, nothing gave me more pain than to know you were living within a short distance from the monastery, and I could not see you because you harboured an unjust resentment against me. On several occasions I sent Don Luis Quijada to explain everything to you, because, knowing your worth and your priceless merit, your continued enmity caused me great sorrow, and I desired your friendship more than the sceptre of all the empires in the world. God, who is just, has brought about the reconciliation, and therefore happily relieved my soul from the burthen which sorely oppressed it, and my gratitude will end only with my life. How could you, old man, ever have thought for a single moment that I would have consented to the execution of your son, knowing that his father was the bravest and most gallant soldier of Ponce de Leon and Isabella I."

The veteran knight of the valley would sit listening delightedly to the words of this great man, spoken with all the simplicity of a child.

"And Magdalena, how is she?" the emperor one day asked.

"Ah, sire!" sadly replied the old man; "she suffers much, but she is an angel, and has resolved to consecrate herself to God."

"Noble, beautiful child!" exclaimed the emperor; "let us leave that lovely flower to take shelter in the mystic garden of the Church."

The maladies of the emperor increased, and toward the end of August he had dangerous attacks of fever, which became so complicated that the physicians pronounced his case hopeless.

There, in that humble monastery, once so full of life, and proud of the royal inmate who had rendered Yuste so famous, sad, anxious days were passed, precursors of an event which later on convulsed the whole Catholic world. His state became so alarming that he was unable to leave his bed. Special couriers were despatched in all haste to King Philip II., to inform him of his father's illness.

An obstinate, malignant fever was making rapid inroads into that powerful, vigorous

frame, and life was gradually becoming extinguished, like a spent-out lamp. Yet he never lost that fortitude of spirit which was his great characteristic, and which had given the world such a noble example of resignation. His countenance manifested that sublime melancholy peculiar to souls full of confidence, and his eyes shone with a serene light; around his mouth hovered a kind smile, and his brow, ever raised to the God of mercy and of love, possessed a radiance like a mysterious halo. Thus, full of holy joy, he calmly awaited his last hour, like those brave martyrs who smiled on their executioners.

Around him were his dear friends; but though it was grateful to him to see them surround his deathbed, yet he would constantly and almost bitterly ask, "Has my son, Don Felipe, not arrived?"

This great, renowned man, the Emperor Charles V., lacked in his last hour the consolation which was rarely denied to his meanest vassal—no child of his, no relation whatever, received the last look of his dying mortal eyes! Was it ingratitude on the part of his

firstborn? Was there some State reason for this abandonment? No one can tell.

He desired a portrait of the empress, taken by Titian, to be brought to him; he gazed upon it for a long time, greatly moved. Then, asking for a picture of our Lord's agony in the garden, he arose and knelt before it in deep contemplation. The "Last Judgment" of Titian, at his request, was brought in—that painting which so splendidly portrays the diverse effects of hope and fear; and before this sublime conception of the Apocalypse his spirit seemed to fail him, and he remained in a trance for some time.

On the following day he received the holy sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist with great devotion, repeating the words, *in me manes ego in te manem.* Extreme unction was then administered, which he received with sentiments of the most fervent piety, believing his hour had come, and recited the litanies and psalms. Thus prepared, he calmly awaited his death.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END.

On the night of the 20th September, 1558, the emperor's bedchamber of Yuste presented a sad and lamentable scene. By the bedside of the Cæsar stood Don Fernando Alvarez, the Count of Oropesa, his brother, Don Francisco his uncle, Don Diego, Don Luis de Avila, and his faithful friend, Don Luis Quijada. The two Castilians of the valley, Ruy Gomez and Conrado, were also present. At midnight the emperor desired to converse alone with Luis Quijada, with whom he was closeted, receiving his last instructions, until, feeling worse, he sent for the erudite monk, Fray Francisco de Villalua, who received his confession. He then asked for the crucifix and taper which his grandfather, Maximilian, and the Empress Isabella had

held on their deathbeds. The crucifix being handed to him, he burst into tears and pressed it to his lips. After this he received once more the holy *viaticum*, with all that veneration and love he had ever manifested towards this ineffable institution of the Son of God.

Fray Francisco de Villalua then addressed him, saying: "Sire, be joyful, for on the feast of St. Matthias your majesty was born; to Matthias was given the apostleship, as the empire was given to your majesty, and on the feast of St. Matthew your majesty quits this earth, having left all things for Christ, as Matthew forsook his riches."

The emperor listened with rapt attention to these words, so full of consolation and hope; and a few moments later his agony returned, when asking for the crucifix and taper, he cast a look of ineffable love on the cross, repeated the holy Name of Jesus three times, and calmly expired.

Prior Angulo left the chamber and announced the sad tidings to the persons assembled in the adjoining rooms, saying, in a

solemn tone, "The Emperor Charles V. has ceased to exist; let us pray for him."

The bells of the monastery at day-break saluted the Aurora tolling a death-knell, and the nightingale of the Sierra Jaranda, on that eventful, mournful day, sang its plaintive notes with peculiar sadness.

His funeral obsequies were celebrated during the three following days by Archbishop Carranza, assisted by Prior Angulo, in the church of the monastery, with the utmost pomp and solemnity. Solemn requiems were sung in many parts. At Valladolid the *oraison funèbre* was delivered by Father Francis Borgia, formerly Duke of Gandia, and who had been the intimate friend of Charles V. Philip II. assisted at the obsequies performed in Brussels. In Bologna it was celebrated with much pomp in the Spanish college, as also in Rome, where Ascanio Caracolo assisted. Nineteen cardinals, many bishops and ambassadors were present; the oration was delivered by Paulo Flavio, public lecturer in the college of Rome. And lastly, his death was mourned throughout Europe,

Asia, Africa, and America; and even Selim, the Turkish Sultan, ordered a tribute to be paid to his memory in Constantinople.

His mortal remains were transferred, by order of his son, Philip II., to the royal pantheon of the Escorial, granting to the monastery of Yuste, as a great privilege, the possession of the oaken coffin which was used while removing his remains.

This coffin is the only relic of the renowned Emperor Charles V. which has been preserved in that ruined and forgotten monastery.

EPILOGUE.

THREE years after the death of Charles V., the bells of the Convent of Coria, in Trujillo, announced, with loud ringing peals, that a virgin destined to be a spouse of the Lamb without spot was about to take the veil.

That virgin was Magdalena.

One month had elapsed since the death of Ruy Gomez de Varela, and his grandchildren faithful to their promises, were fulfilling his last wishes.

Conrado, attired in court-dress of richest silk and brocade, was leading his sister by the hand, crowned with roses and dressed in white costly bridal robes. Her step was firm, and a sweet smile was on her lips. A large number of relations and friends followed them, as was due to their distinguished rank.

On that day the cloister door closed for ever upon Magdalena.

Conrado, faithful to his pledged word, bade his sister adieu, and went to the war, seeking his friend John.

The Sultan Selim, in the year 1571, resolved to conquer the island of Chipre, which was then in the possession of the Venetians, and he took the cities of Nicossia and Famagusta.

An alliance was formed between Pope Pius V., the Republic of Venice, and the King of Spain, Philip II., to jointly proceed against the Turks. The command of the entire squadron, consisting of 200 vessels, was entrusted to the valiant Captain Don Juan de Austria. The allied Christian fleet sighted the enemy's squadron in the Gulf of Lepanto, or Corinth, close to the island of Cephalonia. The battle was fought on the 7th of October, 1571. The allies conquered, and so completely were they victorious, that they either captured or destroyed 200 Turkish galleys; the number of dead, wounded and prisoners exceeding 25,000. The allies would have carried their efforts still farther, and occupied the Straits of Gallipolis, or Hellespont, with the object of

taking Constantinople, had they not at that juncture retired to Messina.

Thus was Europe saved from a second Mahometan invasion, a victory which has merited the gratitude of posterity.

The hero of that great and arduous undertaking, and who perished on that day, the hapless Don Juan de Austria, carried upon his standard a cross with the following motto beneath: "*With this sign shall Turks be conquered, and by this sign also will heresies be destroyed.*"

The reader, ere this, must have guessed that Don Juan de Austria, the little page of Yuste, was the son of the Emperor Charles V. and Barbara de Blomberg.

THE END.

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